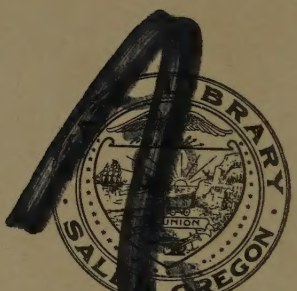
The Adventure of Old Age

By Francis Bardwell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The Adventure of Old Age

THE ADVENTURE OF OLD AGE

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BY

FRANCIS BARDWELL

WITH PREFACE BY

RICHARD C. CABOT

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Interesting conclusions and reminiscences of the veteran Massachusetts State Visitor to Aged People in Almshouses. Valuable for social workers.

Social Forces Dec. 1926

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The author, an official of the public welfare department of Massachusetts, is well qualified to speak of the problems of old age. The book contains a short discussion of these problems, together with a number of sketches and poems on old age, slightly sentimental in tone, but none the less appealing. Author is state visitor of almshouses in Massachusetts.

362.6 Old age

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PREFACE

By Richard C. Cabot

ONE of the many reasons for reading this book is the character and authority of its author. Francis Bardwell, whose address, as we see it in the corner of his letters (Room 38, State House, Boston) suggests only the Public Welfare Department which he serves — has been for over seventeen years the State's visitor of aged people in almshouses. When they or their guardians are in trouble, they send for Mr. Bardwell. In due time there arrives a cheery, alert, courteous gentleman-of-the-old-school, with a genius for sympathy and good-humor. On such errands he has visited the Town Farm (almshouse) of *every* town and hamlet from Cape Town to the Berkshires and beyond them; and so tenacious is his memory that he can tell you poignant and charming stories of his old friends in almost every almshouse in Massachusetts.

Preface

This work is a labor of love for Mr. Bardwell. He comes of a family of old-Boston merchants engaged in the China trade. A merchant he, too, was to have been. But finding the atmosphere of State Street uncongenial, he settled as a young man in the town of Sherborn, near Framingham, and took to farming. This occupation, however, interested him less than the town itself, his friends and neighbors, and especially the poorer among them. So in due time he was chosen Overseer of the Poor and gave up farming for the more congenial task of befriending his fellows, a vocation which, as State Visitor of Almshouses, he now follows.

Most of the old people in our almshouses are still of the old Yankee stock and doubtless this is one reason why they appeal so much to the Yankee in Mr. Bardwell. Yankee he is to the core. His shrewd, swift penetration, his keen and kindly sense of humor, his power of fierce burning indignation at any injustice or meanness, make him a watchful guardian and a welcome visitor to those in trouble at the Town Farms. On these visits he comes not only as guardian and champion of justice, but as an old

friend who does not forget his friends and who has much more a personal than a professional interest. For he has two qualities not always to be found in Yankees — an exceptionally warm heart and a quick responsiveness to the pathetic and the tragic, as well as to the comic, in the lives of the aged poor.

All this, however, is not enough to fit him for telling in prose and in verse such stories of his people as he has brought together in this book. One has to enlarge the current notion of Yankee character if it is to include the capacity for poetic feeling and literary skill which is manifest in these stories. But then that is just the kind of Yankee that Mr. Bardwell has always been. When at thirteen the reading of 'Paradise Lost' was imposed on him as a punishment, he absorbed the poem with delight! Ever since then he has been a voluminous and enthusiastic reader, and for many years, as trustee of the town library at Sherborn, he has read and carefully selected the books for its shelves. He remembers being taken to visit Emerson in Concord, and, as his aunt was a

near neighbor of Oliver Wendell Holmes, he recalls many a walk and talk with the 'Autocrat.'

With this background it was natural for him to set down, first in verse, later in prose, some of the most moving and amusing incidents in the lives of his almshouse friends. He wrote with no thought of publication, simply out of the impulse of admiration and of affection.

So we find beauty and artistic truth blossoming out of a corner where we should scarcely expect them — Room 38, State House. Perhaps we ought to expect them. Who knows what poetry is immured in the Department of Health, what impulse to æsthetic creation lurks in the office of the Smoke Inspector and troubles the Division of Statistics?

But however this may be, we certainly must assert that Mr. Bardwell's work, as this book suggests it, is a tribute to the good sense of Massachusetts governors and the perspicacity of Massachusetts legislatures. We rail at 'politics' — sometimes with good reason. But in fairness we must recognize that it is under 'politics' that we have had Walter E. Fernald in charge of our backward children; Jessie D.

Hodder as Superintendent of our Reformatory for Women; and, as visitor to our almshouses, Francis Bardwell, exquisite delineator of the aged poor. To him and those who have made his work possible — many thanks!

RICHARD C. CABOT

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The Adventure of Old Age

THE ADVENTURE OF OLD AGE

* * *

INTRODUCTION

I. *Some Characteristics of Elderly People who are Poor*

THE publication of this book has a twofold reason, first, a desire on my part to urge a keener interest in the problem of the aged dependent, and second, a plea for better understanding of the human side of welfare work, especially as it bears upon the care of old people.

The coming of old age is hard to bear, but, if poverty is attendant, the burden is doubly severe. It is with this dual trial that I have had much to do, and, because of an earnest desire to smooth the way, I have become acquainted with many people who are living the latest years of life dependent upon the bounty of the public.

The Adventure of Old Age

We have no gauge to determine the exact time in life when old age comes upon the scene. Some people are old at fifty, some young at ninety. While the men or women of sixty oftentimes like to refer to themselves as old people, the person of fourscore, just as often, belittles the years. Then again some natures are crushed by trouble, while others seem to thrive in adversity. Some will accept meekly entrance to an almshouse, while others will fight fiercely against such a final disposition of their few remaining years, and wage a bitter conflict, never becoming wholly reconciled.

Any one who is sympathetically interested in humanity, and particularly humanity in distress, will find that the Town Farm furnishes an ideal setting for the study of character. The inmate population is not from any single stratum of society. There is an admixture of all types; from the descendant of the family chronically dependent for generations, to the last of a line which goes back to a colonial governor, and to the usual intermediate individuals, whose forbears were neither dependent nor famous.

Many of these people have started out in life in much the same manner that you and I have started; have had the same hopes and ambitions, have had the same joys and sorrows; have perhaps never dreamed of dependence until it was a reality; or have seen it coming through the years of middle age and knew that it was inevitable unless death intervened. I cannot say which is the easier to bear, the sudden coming, or the long-delayed advent. Women, I think, take dependence harder than men, and women living as dependents are usually much more dignified in adversity; that is, bearing at least a demeanor of reconciliation with an unkind fate. Usually, however, if one can draw aside the mask, one finds a nature that is suffering from the hopelessness of it all, and a resolute endeavor to smile away the tears. Men, on the other hand, usually accept the coming of age and dependence in a matter-of-fact way. Men, if you will remember, have been in the home less and in the world more, have been better mixers than women, and consequently fit into an almshouse environment with more adaptability. Then, too, men are apt to surren-

der more easily. Not but what in both cases there are exceptions which prove the rule.

Perhaps the one distinct type that seldom fits is the man or woman who has lived a solitary existence. A hermit life often begets or nourishes egotism; a person shut away from the companionship of others gradually cultivates a state of mind wherein he or she is the center of all things. The hermit sees only his own microscopic bit of earth, with its limited horizons, and in it he is the only human being. People of this type, transplanted to the more social atmosphere of the Town Farm, languish and are seldom happy. They are forced to learn, at the ending of life, that the world is larger than they thought, that other human beings, with varied ideas and characteristics, people it. Usually they continue their solitary existence, even in the companionship of other people. They are pathetic figures, unhappy misfits.

With the Town Farm population I have found, just as in the world, that the one who talks the most says the least. I have found also that, if one can break down the barrier, the average old person likes to talk and, like ninety

per cent of humanity, likes to talk about himself or herself. I have found that most people have grown old without knowing it. It has come stealing upon them gradually. The coming of the impairment of sight, of hearing, of power, of memory, and finally the accepted status: 'I'm old.' Sometimes they attribute their infirmities to some accident or illness. For they like to excuse senescence. I heard one man, whose locomotion was labored, explain it by: 'I ain't never been the same since I was "struct" by lightning.' He was nearing seventy. When I conveyed this information to a fellow inmate, who was singularly hale and hearty at eighty-five, he laughed disdainfully and snorted: '"Struct" by lightning! Blamed fool! why didn't he dodge it!' Eighty-five would probably have made the attempt.

Let me record that the average aged person, who has gone through life unmarried, is usually opinionated. Now that is putting it mildly. Some in harsher terms call it 'cussed' and 'cantankerous.' They have lived for and by the little things of life, have never been called upon to yield, and consequently hold tenaciously to

their own ways and ideas. They are selfish. The penalty of such a person coming into the Town Farm family is usually ostracism. In some cases the individual is removed and a boarding-place found if possible; not wholly because the individual may be happier there, but because the happiness of the Town Farm family is impaired by the person's presence.

To the average individual the experience of growing old is not pleasant; even if his life is cast in the ways of affluence and with all material desires fulfilled. Of such, we visualize the pleasant room, the bright fire, the comfortable chair, the kindly old soul, cheerful and happy. But even here it is the falling away of all one held dear that makes a hard reality of life. Age has its attendant ills; its losses of friends and relations; its outlook on a changing world. An old man who lived to be within a year of fivescore put it concisely: 'I have buried three wives. I have buried the children's children of my companions. It's a queer world of strange faces and different ways. No! I don't want to live to be a hundred.'

I can write that almost invariably people

who attain great age seem reconciled to passing. So little remains to be fulfilled. You see, it is the mourning for youth, the desire for other times, the wish to turn back the clock; the yearning of December for May. But then again there are the indomitable, the unbeatable; the individual upon whose ambitions the years, be they fourscore, touch lightly, who never realize the limitations of age. Such a one, thrice widowed and eighty, once triumphantly greeted me with: 'You know me to-day as Mrs. Hyde. Well, perhaps next month my name will be Chase. I've hired to keep house for Mr. Chase.'

But Chase realizing, no doubt, the pursuit, died, and Mrs. Hyde was back at the Town Farm, with hope eternal springing in her aged bosom, for didn't she tell me that: 'Chase needn't have thought he was the only man on earth, there are others.' Yet she died as Mrs. Hyde, in spite of her ambitions.

I have seldom seen characteristic belligerency in aged men. They seem to accept, seem to have abandoned hope of further endeavor when they entered the Town Farm and are

well content to drift down the current of the remaining years, nor man an oar. To carry this out, let me state the case of Bascom. When I met him he was ninety-three, blind and quite feeble. In his youth he had owned a remarkable silver mine in the West. Once he was offered over half a million dollars for it, but he laughed at the offer. It was not unusual for this man to spend ten thousand dollars in a night's revel. But the mine ran out and he became a homeless wanderer. Once, taken to task because of his improvidence with: 'Why Mr. Bascom, the money you often spent in one night's revelry if placed at interest would keep you now,' he brought forth this: 'I'm blind, I'm ninety-three, all my food tastes like sawdust, I know few people, and those I have never seen. But I can sit and think of what a —— good time I did have and at a time when I could enjoy it. I'm not sorry for spending my money as I did.'

The study of character is like the study of a picture. Most pictures suffer by the analysis of detail. Critics point to faulty anatomy, poor

lighting, bad grouping, wrong perspective, lack of atmosphere, and so on. Well and good; but the most of us enjoy a picture in its entirety, the effect of the 'tout ensemble.' It is much the same with human character, a minute study brings out and emphasizes the faults; perhaps it is because of this that 'no man was ever a hero to his valet.' I certainly believe that in judging character we should brush aside the little faults and judge the individual as a whole.

'They say,' an almshouse friend said to me once, 'that he's cross-eyed. Well, maybe he is, I never look at his eyes.' I think that is the way to judge old people. If they say sarcastic things, and if their remarks are occasionally caustic, it is wise to be stricken with temporary deafness. Like children, such old people usually talk for effect and, if the effect is not forthcoming and noticeable, the endeavor is useless and is seldom persisted in.

For a better understanding, let me say the home life in the average country almshouse, or as the town people call it the Town Farm, is not an unpleasant existence. The population, consisting mostly of elderly people and with a

small sprinkling of community misfits, coming from all walks of life, is a fairly happy family. Old people have told me that the most peaceful years of their lives were spent at the Town Farm — peaceful because free from the worry that has made much of their life miserable and unhappy. Here at the Town Farm they fit into the home environment, happy in the performance of such little tasks, for the benefit of the community, as their age and physical condition permit.

The point, however, that they are old people must not be forgotten, that they are usually quite set in their ways, decidedly opinionated, free to criticize, jealous of their rights. I have had occasion to notice certain characteristic traits and have tried to show them in the sketches which follow in this book. I will sum them up here.

1. *Old people love little children*

It is quite a hardship to be shut away from the companionship of children during one's last years. Sometimes the Jews maintain joint homes, under one roof, for children and old

people. We are inclined to frown upon such a system. Still, I wonder if these people of an ancient civilization have not realized the desire of old people to dwell in the companionship of children. Age craves youth, just as truly as like seldom fraternizes with like in our almshouses or institutions which hold various types of dependent or defective people. The blind, for instance, find more comfort in the companionship of those who are not sightless. So it is that the coming of a baby into an almshouse is welcome; a new joy has come to the old people, a keener interest in life. Life seems more normal. There is a sharp rivalry as to who may hold the child, who push the carriage, who watch while it sleeps. Those who are able take enjoyment in making things for it. A knit hood, mittens, socks, from the women; or from the men a doll's carriage, a boat, a sled.

Of course, we say children shall not be allowed to remain in almshouses and mean thereby dependent children; you see, we are thinking of the welfare of the child. But the matron sometimes has a little family, and the hired girl may be the mother of a baby. It is

the coming of these children which means much to the old people of the inmate family. I have tried to show this in the stories of 'The Blessed Babe,' and 'Concerning Tommy.' So let us record that most old people love the companionship of little children.

2. *Independence of spirit*

There is in these old people the spirit of freedom, even though the body has to be cared for because of its infirmities, a will to do and do as one always has done, a spirit that chafes at restraint. This, which many of us call willfulness, is a characteristic trait of most old people, especially of those who have always enjoyed their own way. It is quite difficult to reason with such people; persuasion is of little avail. To them the younger generation is still a generation of infants; suggestions from it are not solicited and advice is seldom willingly followed. Old people fail to realize that, while they have been nearing fourscore, the next generation has passed the half-century mark. I have shown this independence of spirit in 'The Piller and the "Claoud."' Jason was not such a ter-

rible old man, but he was bound to have his own way, both about the walk to the Town Farm and in the wearing of the 'Claoud.' We find the same tenacity in 'Rosalie,' that most lovable old French Canadian, bound to cure her herbs in her own way, and in 'Raisin' Dates,' the story of the very willful Tim Murphy, the enemy of all 'cops.'

3. *Old people crave attention*

Is it characteristic of most humans, or does the trait become intensified as age approaches — the desire to be in the limelight? For certainly most old people want attention and attention above their fellows. They want to be considered 'somebody.' They resent the least slight, strive for selective recognition; want to become known because of some characteristic, or some incident in a past life that sets them apart from others. They warm to such comments as: 'You know I cannot forget you, because you make such wonderful braided rugs'; or, 'No man ever made better axe handles than you make.' They rather enjoy being so singled out.

4. *Normal old people, as I have seen them, are invariably courteous*

I care not from what walk in life an old person may have come, I have invariably found an old-fashioned courtesy in their behavior. This is surprising, because most of my Town Farm friends have never enjoyed social advantages and come from the ranks of the poorest; still they possess what we are wont to call good manners, so lacking in many of our younger generation. I am forced to admit that these people who have come down to us from former times probably reflect the custom of their time and generation. I know this: that in the time of these people's youth old age was respected; then, the younger people stood aside, so that age might pass, or assisted if assistance was necessary. Old people have bemoaned the passing of this respect for the aged. It was a part of their education to respect and look up to old people. They are ending their days in a strange and bustling world, too intent upon its own pleasure or business to bother with old people, and, as these old people see it, amongst a younger generation which respects nothing.

5. *Old people are interested in the past*

Somehow, when old people tell you things, episodes in their own lives that have left an impress or a scar, you usually are interested and do not forget these incidents. Ofttimes these things are trivial, yet, by constant telling and because they have been uppermost in the mind, seem to become of moment. Then again, some intensely dramatic incident is disclosed to you in ordinary conversation; and so with much questioning you get the facts. To the person who tells it, it may seem only casual and of little moment. In the verses, hereinafter, 'Cunner Rock,' 'Nathan's Star,' 'The Fingers of the Sleet' — the one great thing in an individual life has been set forth. Old people, whose eyesight is failing, or who are, because of deafness, shut away from others, sit and think, and always the mind reverts to the one outstanding episode which may have influenced their life, perhaps a happy event or a sad disappointment. The verses, 'Carcassonne' show this, the bitter disappointment of a child, still bitter after seventy years.

6. *Old people are naturally devout*

Probably because the end of the road is in sight, that the allotted time of the psalmist is past, so age desires to make its peace with God. This I do know, that nearly all old women and many old men are devout. Those inmates of the Catholic faith get wonderful solace from their prayers and enjoy their devotion. One passes their rooms silently, so that they may not be disturbed. The women of the older generation of native stock manifest a genuine love for the Bible and for Bible-reading. Many times we find among an old lady's effects, after her death, her well-worn Bible. Attics of the old Town Farms proclaim this fact. I acknowledge that I am no match in theological reasoning for many of my friends, and, that as compared to them, in the matter of Bible history I am a novice. Their faith, tested by poverty and all its attendant ills, is firm and unshaken. Their religious reasoning is hedged about with simplicity, but with a firm faith in the literal words of the Bible.

I have touched upon this habit of Bible-reading in 'Company in Heaven,' 'The Little

Things of Life,' and 'The Coming of the Wilderness.' The male Bible student (inheriting more faithfully the spirit of his Puritan forefathers) is more controversial. His desire is for more argument, he shows inclination to twist a text to his own way of reasoning. I knew one who always began his argument with 'The Bible ain't all true, 'cos who was Cain's wife?' And having so prefaced his remarks, launched into an argument that would have added luster to the name of some colonial divine.

7. *Old people desire peace*

I have had occasion to state that old people consider that they are living in a strange world, unlike the dwelling-place of their younger days. It is because of this that some simply desire to be left alone, to end their days in peace and in an unobtrusive way. Beyond the little limits of their intellectual horizon they do not care to go. It is rather sweet to end one's days in peace, not to be forced to become a part of the world that is strange. Of that world they have known too much, perhaps; fate and humanity have dealt unkindly with them. The verses 'Andree del

Robie' show this trait in a very likable old man (not an almshouse friend) who asked only to be left in peace with his daughter, a wish, however, that was not granted by the artist who became his son-in-law. 'Took Care Of' is another example of such a desire.

The aged belligerent type is the exception. As a fitting contrast to 'Took Care Of,' read 'The Coming of the Wilderness.' The cheerful, lonely spinster fighting, as her forbears fought, the encircling forest.

8. *The unmarried woman's devotion to the memory of her father*

I was inclined to call this title 'Hero Worship,' for such it really is. Maiden ladies (quite Victorian, yes, why not Victorian in describing those of the Victorian generation?) as their years advance show a decided tendency to deify a father. They build up a tender fabric of devotion, a shrine, as it were, in which they place their memory of the most wonderful virtues which they feel he should have possessed, and gradually feel that he did possess. The pathetic part of all this is that such worship is

usually given to a most unworthy person, a man whose life in many cases was spent in excesses, whose existence was a reproach, whose lack of thrift was responsible for the family's want, and who, in some instances, zigzagged between home, court, and jail. Notwithstanding all this, however, an aged daughter will reverence the memory of such a man and the years increase the false luster of his heroic crown. This is shown in the story 'Page Mr. Stevens.'

Strange, but true, widows are seldom the relicts of heroes. That is, from their own estimation; married women are not given to hero worship and usually hold no illusions toward the opposite sex.

9. *The dread of mental decadence*

I have marked this fear of senility particularly in old people who are above the average in education and intelligence. 'I can't remember names.' 'I'm getting so I forget everything.' 'I hope I shall never lose my mind.' These are rather common expressions; and often the manner of the saying conveys the idea that the speakers are a bit worried. Some-

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times they try to laugh it off with: 'I'm getting childish.' Nevertheless, it is a dread of becoming a further care to others.

I once became quite well acquainted with a most interesting man, a graduate of one of the famous universities and an inmate in a small Town Farm, now closed. This man was eccentric; for instance, he steadfastly refused to wear stockings and insisted on wearing arctics summer and winter. In his early career he had been a school-teacher. He had brought his small library to the Town Farm and took keen enjoyment in reading. It was his invariable custom, at the first hint of snow, to read Whittier's 'Snow-Bound.' The last time I talked with him (he was approaching eighty) I spoke of this custom, one in fact we both enjoyed. He hesitated before he replied and then confessed:

'I did not read "Snow-Bound" this year. I couldn't. Sentimentality, I suppose. I'm growing old. Such simple things as are told in "Snow-Bound" affect me; I have no control over my emotions. It is age; but not a preface to senility; not that!'

I never saw him again. His estimate of the effect of the simple things, that brought back other times, upon the emotions, was just. He realized eventually that age had come. I think, too, he dreaded a senile old age, because he emphasized the fact that his overmastering emotion was not a preface to senility.

II. *Why Old People Need Help*

This brings me to the *causes of dependence in old age.* These causes are various, such as, illness and the attendant depletion of savings, or the falling away of those who should be helpers. I say falling away, because not all desertions are caused by death. Or it may be the dishonesty or rascality of those to whom have been entrusted the person's savings, or the gradual failing of the power to work, or vicious habits of the individual, such as intemperance. Last, but not least, dependence may be due to the unselfish will to help others carried on until the door of the Town Farm swings open to receive. Once some one said to me: 'With some people it is always a race, these last few years of life — a race between

the bank book, the undertaker, and the Town Farm.'

So you see it isn't always lack of thrift, or lack of hard work, that sends people to the Town Farm. If we can get behind the mask, we find, in many cases, a most unselfish existence, lived calmly and quietly and in a matter-of-fact way, with little inclination to make public its kindnesses. Several years ago, being interested in the causes of poverty, causes which eventually led to public dependence, I started out to ascertain the reasons which made people dependent. I took for my field the country almshouses or Town Farms. This ground, it seemed to me, was the best possible choice. First, because it is not difficult to get the most important facts in the lives of the inmates of the Town Farms. They were usually country people born and reared in the environment, and their peculiarities and ways of living were known to others. And second, because a study of these people covers all types and causes of dependence, since the specialized private charitable agency does not, as a rule, function in the rural districts.

The facts in this study were obtained from the individual; from the superintendents and matrons, provided their time of service had been of such duration that they had become well acquainted with their inmates; and from overseers of the poor.

It was felt that old age was a cause; that loss of natural supporters or refusal of natural supporters to assist was a cause; and it was felt that, even if an individual had used liquor, but had failed to be aided before seventy, intemperance could hardly be called a cause. Secondary intemperance was set down in those cases when the liquor habit had been formed after forty-five.

'Lack of thrift' was the term used in those cases when the individual had started out in life with some property, or when the earning power had been above the average and no unusually heavy expenses had depleted it — a careless wasting of money. The result of this survey was as follows. The number of cases studied was 1129 and are here set forth in the order of frequency:

		Per cent
1. Physical defect	273	or 24.
2. Mental defect	228	20.
3. Old age	208	18.
4. Primary intemperance	171	14.
5. Both physical defect and intemperance.	41	3.
6. Both physical and mental defect	40	3.
7. Loss of legal or natural supporters	31	2.
8. Lack of thrift	29	2.
9. Lazy, indolent, but temperate	23	2.
10. Both physical defect and old age	22	2.
11. Epilepsy — only cause	16	1.5
12. Secondary intemperance (after forty-five)	10	1.
13. Primary intemperance and mental defect	9	.9
14. Primary intemperance and lack of thrift	9	.9
15. Drug habit	6	.6
16. Incompatibility of disposition	5	.5
17. Physical defect and loss of natural supporters	4	.4
18. Physical defect and lack of thrift	3	.3
19. Physical defect and secondary intemperance	1	.1

The percentages are approximate. Of these, six suffered from unfortunate love affairs, and four were born and always lived in the almshouse.

This study showed that forty-seven per cent were dependent because of physical or mental defect or both, eighteen per cent because of old

age, fifteen per cent because of intemperance. No attempt was made to get at the matter of heredity — a vital question and one I think closely allied with intemperance. It is probable that quite a number of those mentally defective were children of intemperate parents. Of the four cases born in the almshouse and still living there, all were aged people and all mentally defective. One has since died at the age of eighty-one. This is the record case as far as I know; fourscore years and one in the same almshouse, a simple-minded, kindly, little old woman, and who shall say she did not live happily?

This, of course, is the statistical setting forth of the reason of dependence. Nearly one fifth of these people were almshouse inmates because of advanced age; in many cases the will to work was apparent, but infirmities due to age prevented. It is well to note here that even if people are obliged to end the last years of life as dependents, it has seldom been a willing surrender. I have found that it is the almost universal dread of the 'poorhouse' which has kept many from applying for assistance when

beset by dire distress; and that a deferred entrance meant in some cases that the individual was suffering from the effect of undernourishment and low vitality. You will acknowledge with me that there are a great many things that cannot be set forth statistically, and also that one can read between the lines in all statistics. There have been many, many factors that have influenced people's lives, but which cannot be set forth statistically. It is, I have found, the unusual that makes social work of interest.

I cannot pass from this subject without dwelling at some length upon the devotion to others that has been shown in the lives of dependent old people. Perhaps the saddest cases that finally drift into our Town Farms are the aged unmarried daughters, who have devoted their lives to the care and happiness of parents. Such a woman may have been one of a large family, and yet somehow, from the first, the other brothers and sisters seem to have accepted the fact that this particular daughter will be the one to care for the parents. So the family drift away from the home to make homes of their own, drift away from the

neighborhood, perhaps, and, busied with their own affairs and their own family responsibilities, forget the devoted daughter left to care for her parents. While the others are earning, she is laboring without pay. She sees the savings of her parents dwindle as the years progress, and usually, at fifty or sixty, is thrown upon the world to make a brave but hopeless fight for self-support. I have encountered many of these women, who, through devotion, have been robbed of much of the sweetness of life and who eventually have been forced to enter a Town Farm because of poverty, age, and infirmities.

Is it always the women who are devoted? To me it has so seemed, for there again is the other type, the woman who is the mother of an afflicted child, a feeble-minded or crippled son or daughter. I have come in contact with a number of these groups. Both mother and child have been brought to the Town Farm, and I have seen the intense maternal devotion toward the unfortunate son or daughter and have tried as best I could to assuage the grief of the son or daughter when the tired mother was at last called. There is no grief like the hope-

less sorrow of a man-child, who may be fifty years of age, for a devoted mother, whose life was his life and whose taking away he cannot understand. I have tried to show this in the story, 'Concerning Tommy.'

There are rare instances when men have made this sacrifice, either in the care devoted to an invalid wife, or an aged mother, or an unfortunate brother or sister. Of the latter the character of Seth in the sketch 'Sunset Glow' is an example.

III. *How to Care for Old People who are Poor*

The care of aged dependent people is now at last recognized as a social problem. Time was (and not so many years ago, either) when the only disposition of such cases was the almshouse or the privately managed home for the aged. We have progressed, and have come to realize that the happiness of the individual most concerned is of moment, in fact is the most important goal. The framers of the Declaration of Independence granted life and liberty; then it is probable that they paused and weighed the question before adding 'and

the pursuit of happiness.' You will note they did not grant happiness, only the pursuit of happiness. In casting about as to the final disposition of these aged dependent people, we, too, must take into consideration the fact that they are entitled to the pursuit of happiness in their declining years.

Not all dependent old people need institution or custodial care. Their physical and mental condition must be carefully analyzed, and should their dependence prove best remedied by hospitalization or custodial care, then a private institution or an almshouse is the proper place. But there are many who are well able to continue in their own homes, provided the means are found; others can be and should be placed in a suitable boarding-home, to live out to the end their own life in a manner most conducive to their happiness. It is because this class of aged dependents is now recognized that the numbers in the smaller almshouses have decreased. It is not because there are fewer dependent people, but because we now care for them much more intelligently. To this class would accrue the advantages of a pension for

aged people. Yet if the stigma of pauper (that good old word that has become so misused that we are reading it out of the language) could be removed, and proper aid allowed by towns and cities to augment small and rapidly dwindling incomes, there would be little backing for a state or national pension system. The matter is as broad as it is long from the standpoint of money expenditure. There should be no classes in public relief work. All the money for such purposes comes from the public and is raised by taxation, whether it be for children, for mothers with dependent children, for family aid, for the almshouse, or for the relief of dependent soldiers. All such recipients are public dependents and no legislation can change it by designating other names for certain types or by making preferred classes. Therefore, why not give adequate outdoor relief to aged dependents, as supplementary aid to savings? Why wait until the savings and home are gone and a real heart-breaking problem comes into existence?

I have not yet touched upon the subject of old couples. It is quite surprising how few such

are cared for in our almshouses. There are several reasons for this. First, the average overseer of the poor considers an aged couple as a family unit, and, if able to care for themselves, grants support in their own home. (This situation may change. One of them may be obliged to be removed because in need of hospital care, and the other may have to be placed in an almshouse.) Second, it is usually the case, when there are children, that the mother will be taken into the home of one of the children, and we get the father as an almshouse inmate. These are the two principal reasons of the absence of old couples at the almshouse. It is not always inhuman to separate an old couple. I have had instances when the wife, bitter because of her husband's worthlessness, absolutely refused to recognize him when his viciousness had brought both to the almshouse. In most cases the husband has had the dominating influence and has made a wreck of their two lives. But there are ever the patient and forgiving women who cling; who tell you they married for better or worse and who accept the worse with no protest.

One aged couple who ended their days at a small Town Farm stay ever in my memory, because they celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of their wedding there. She was the dominating personality and boiled with indignation when they finally brought her and her husband to the little Town Farm. He was ninety-eight, she two years younger. For some reason she blamed him, and he was such a meek, kind, old man. 'All his fault,' she protested to me; 'see him sittin' there and not fighting against it. I know we lived in a lonesome place and no near neighbors, but we'd always lived there. He was afraid! Afraid! I had a dog and a gun, I wasn't afraid! He's goin' downhill! I can see it. Willin' to be told what he must do; and he did it, too. I'd go back home to-day, but he won't come.'

Then I shall never forget the old French Canadian couple. She was ever cheery, accepting uncomplainingly her lot — knitting, forever knitting. Some one had given her a mass of many-colored yarn; this she separated and, measuring with exactness, divided it into two portions. Then the simultaneous knitting of a

pair of socks for her husband began. Each sock had yellow bands at the top, then various colored stripes, on both exactly alike, and so on down to a blue heel, red instep, and purple toe. And, furthermore, her husband wore these wonderful foot coverings. She was thrift spelled with a capital T; had the man of the family shown the same virtue, the couple would never have been obliged to end their days at the Town Farm.

I believe, with the average overseer of the poor, that the aged couple should be considered a family unit and, as long as they are able, should be comfortably provided for in their own home.

IV. *The Attitude of the Social Worker Toward Old People and Other Dependents*

If we are to expect a reasonable amount of success in our social work, we must get in close touch with those whom we desire to help. We must get far away from any word or action that could be construed as being patronizing. What this means is well expressed by my friend Sarah Taylor, who for some twenty years past has

lived a contented life at the Trexham Town Farm and is, despite a question of impaired mentality, somewhat of a philosopher. She is, above all else, a keen student of human nature. Her analysis of character is usually sound and always forceful. Sarah has coined many new words, but to me the best of the coinage is 'humbility.' It fills a niche in our vocabulary that has long been empty and dust-laden. Why should not some brighter mind have discovered this word and put it into use?

Sarah used it to me once as describing a lack in make-up of her minister.

'He ain't got humbility,' she stated emphatically, 'and if them who pretend to be real interested in the poor ain't got humbility, why, I sets it that they ain't really interested.'

I never met this minister, but I think I know what Sarah meant. 'Humbility' does not mean just being humble; rather, according to Sarah, it should convey the sense of social equality. 'If a person is too meek and lowly, why, then you know it's just all put on,' she enlarged, 'and you ain't got patience, 'cause it makes you feel just as if you was a child and a grown

person was trying to talk down to where you were. Humbility means "folksy," just naturally living in the same town, and on the same street — next house, perhaps.'

So there you have it, the new word and its definition.

I am strong for the new word. After seventy years of rich experience and much contact with those who administer relief, Sarah is, in my estimation, a good judge. We want and we need the viewpoint of the Sarah Taylors. We can learn from them our shortcomings, for, perhaps, like her minister, we also lack 'humbility.'

The technique of human companionship is something which as yet we have never tried to teach in our schools of philanthropy. We have taken it as a matter of course, and have gone on to teach methods and ways of investigation and of assistance. We have compiled statistics, formulated theories, created truisms, and laid down rules. But the real individuality of our work sometimes gets farther and farther into the background. Cases are cases. We classify and in so doing lose sight of the individual.

Now, as I estimate it, the entire fabric of social work rests upon our personal relationship with the individual. Of course the individual may belong in any of our designated classes; but this should not rob him of his individuality, for it is because of his individuality that social work holds its marvelous interest. Without delighted recognition of the individual, the work is humdrum, interest is stifled, and our labors fall away. No one knows this better than the individuals who need and are receiving our assistance; the Sarah Taylors. As she indicated, there should always be a proper sentiment, without sentimentality. A friendly companionship, free from any trace of patronage. I have noticed that we usually start out right, and try to live up to our starting. But somehow as we progress, we take the high road and stoop down to do our talking to those on the low road. We become lacking in 'humbility' and our Sarah Taylors know it; for we should all travel the middle road.

Every one knows to-day that the bestowal of adequate material assistance is but a small part of our work. We have learned the technique of

relief. But we have not always learned the manner of giving. In some cases we have been so thoroughly instructed that we look upon needy humanity with distrust and suspicion. We are cultivating legal minds; we are more apt to make an investigation of a person to satisfy ourself that he is an impostor and hence unworthy of assistance, rather than assume that some real need exists and brush aside suspicion. Our attitude has much to do with it in this matter. A social worker must be a diplomat. Any police officer can back a culprit up against a wall and put him through the third degree. A social worker can glean as much real fact in a friendly interview, diplomatically carried on. Sometimes it is what is unsaid that tips the balance, rather than what is said. One must have confidence and show that one has confidence; such confidence is usually contagious.

I am not writing against the technical part of social work. I am urging that with it must go a hearty interest in the individual. Useless each without the other; joined together they make a perfected worker. Technique without

this affectionate interest is what is responsible to-day for the severe criticism of the trained social worker.

It is an interesting fact and true, that country towns, in choosing their overseers of the poor, invariably pick men whose sole recommendation is that 'they are kind to the poor.' These men know their community and its needs, know the people who need help, and, technically untrained as they usually are, do many a fine piece of work. Of course, the problem is vastly different in the rural district. The usual investigation lacks much that appears in an urban case. But the facts are so well known that little investigation is necessary. I am sure that no small measure of success is due to the survival of the old-time neighborhood spirit.

A salesman lacking personality, no matter how skillfully trained, invariably encounters a falling off in his trade. If any vocation needs personality as an asset, it is the calling of the social worker. In the case of the salesman, his sales-slips convict him. But is there any such check on the social worker? Unless you have a

kindly interest in humanity, a keen regard for your neighbor, your neighbor in distress; a will to help spiritually, shall I say, as well as materially; unless you have faith in people, even after your faith has been shaken times innumerable; unless you have a sense of humor; a desire to hang to your friends through thick and thin, a disposition that accepts hard knocks, a genuine sympathy that can override all else, the human side of our technique will probably not appeal to you.

Then, too, can you enter into a friendship that will be helpful and successful, without the entanglement of a sentimental intimacy? The middle road we all must travel together.

Not for one moment must you allow yourself to imagine you alone are the giver. You are going to acquire, from the right kind of human friendliness with dependent people, a vast amount of knowledge not to be learned in schools or set forth in books. You are going to see human relations more intimately, acquire a broader horizon, weigh personality more justly, get a fresh slant on human behavior. But you will get it more readily if you practice Sarah

Taylor's idea embodied in her word 'humbility,' walking companionably along the middle road.

Of course, we all realize that work with aged people does not appeal to the majority of social workers. It lacks the hopefulness that family problems and child welfare offer. The average aged person and his problem holds no real future; it is not 'constructive work'; and most workers, and especially those who are young and enthusiastic, clamor for 'constructive work.' Moreover, to the ambitious worker, set upon his or her own future and desirous of acquiring a name, it would seem that the care of the aged holds little inducement. From my own viewpoint I differ, for I look upon it as the one spot in social work that in the past has been ploughed the most and yet made to bear only negligible crops. I believe that it offers much to the individual who really likes old people and is willing to enter into it with but one object in view — the best and most intelligent care of the aged.

Old people have a very embarrassing way of bobbing up in other branches of social work,

especially in the work with families. They are a by-product and a hindrance ofttimes to a perfected plan. It is then that the worker interested in family welfare sometimes plans an institutional existence for the aged person. It is the easiest way and perhaps beneficial to the rest of the family. But in reality this question is pertinent: 'Why separate the patriarch from the tribe?' Isn't it the savages of South America and Africa who remove their aged people to a lonely hut, deposit a small amount of provisions, and retire? Just how much farther along the highway of civilization have we progressed? I hope we are getting away from the idea that all we can do for old people is to remove them from the world, deposit them in a safe place, where they will be clothed, fed, and cared for, there to await the time when we can step in to fold their work-worn hands and close their tired old eyes. I want to emphasize the fact that about all that is left to them is the pursuit of a tranquil happiness and the hope of heaven. Just why should we halve their expectations and leave them only the hope of heaven? I feel that the compensation for our

work lies in the amount of happiness that can be given to the individual. That is the one big factor in intelligent care of old people.

If I have been technical in my appeal against the one-sidedness of too much technique, then it must be overlooked. It is with the view of emphasizing the human interest in our work that I have recorded hereafter some of the stories of my friends who are ending their days in the almshouse. Many of these friends are wonderful people, have lived lives of unselfishness and devotion. Many have been brought to dependence because of their disregard of self and their solicitude for others.

They are not terrible places, these Town Farms of ours in Massachusetts. Somehow, when I think of some of my friends there, the Town Farms seem the abode of people whose lives have been magnificent failures, of whom the world knows very little and perhaps cares less. Many have started out in life hopefully, but have found life a long battle. Many have been handicapped and have fought a losing fight; fallen by the wayside they have been gathered into the arms of the community and

given a home. I have found that each of them has a story to tell. A story of sad or humorous experiences or of unrealized ambitions; such as Jimmy who aspired to become the head waiter in a lunch-cart, which over its door must have the word 'Café' (pronounced 'Kafe'); or dear old Sarah Taylor, who coins words, and who wanted to be a model Sabbath-School teacher; or Nat, who imagines he is afflicted with all types of diseases and who has not 'lost his mind, but has mislaid it,' yet who wants to be physically sound. Like all of the human family, they enjoy talking about themselves. So from the store of their varied experiences, I have set down a few of their stories, the experiences of real people who are friends of mine.

GROWING OLD

Like to dotter,
Want to potter,
Do a little work.
Like it best
To sit and rest,
Though I feel I shirk.

The Adventure of Old Age

As time passes
Need my glasses
Each day more and more.
And supposin'
I sit dozin'?
It's cause I feel 'wore.'

Need the sunlight,
Want a long night,
Sun to sun's enough.
Tire easy,
Breath comes wheezy,
Past years have been tough.

Know I'm failin',
Note I'm ailin',
Folks all gone before.
Just awaitin',
Contemplatin',
Standing at the door.

Hill grows steeper,
'Spect the Reaper
Almost any day;
Know he's gainin',
'Ain't complainin',
— Nothin' more to say.

I

THE COMING OF THE WILDERNESS

IT isn't that she is a public charge,' Stevens had said. (Stevens was the chairman of the Board of Selectmen.) 'Not that, for she is independent, but, I tell you, it's unchristian in a civilized community that a woman of ninety-six should be left to live alone. I have called often, I have begged, pleaded, even threatened, and all to no avail. You, a stranger, can try and may succeed. We'll take care of her at the Town Farm and you know it will be good care; it's the human way, *but* my experience with old people has convinced me that most of them are (to put it mildly) perverse.'

What Stevens had asked of me was that Miss Charity, who lived alone on the old place, should be persuaded, for the coming winter, at least, to accept the hospitality of her native town, and I was to be the bearer of the invitation. So I got into my buggy and drove over there.

Such a lonely little road, grassed in, save

where the wheel tracks were. It followed the brook, now filled by the autumnal rains and noisy when it rushed over its rocky bed. Woods, in all stages of growth and decay; here a sprout lot, where pine and hemlock had been cut and the hardwood was coming in; beyond, a majestic stand of conifers reaching up the hillside to the crest. Then a lot of the proverbial 'beech, birch, and maple,' now, in early November, bereft of leaf — naked in the sun. There were no houses, only evidences of where farmsteads had once been, depressions, that had once been cellars, now choked with the growth of trees. Occasionally I could trace farm lanes that had formerly extended to the back land. These had been the last to fill up and the trees were of a younger stand. A sharp bend and the road deserts the brook and strikes off up a steep hill, on either side huge sugar maples, of great age and feeble growth, were but standing, dead trunks. A little lane to the left, the first cleared field for a mile, a tiny home-close, an old house facing west, jagged chimneys, sagging rooftree, attic windows shattered — an old deserted 'wood-colored' house.

Pulling up little saplings of birch and pine, and gathering them into her apron, a little bowed woman, Miss Charity. She straightened as my buggy approached, leaned on her crutch cane, and shaded her eyes. Such a pathetic little figure against the background of the great woods that came down almost to the house! She offered a cordial hand.

'I don't know who you are, but won't you come in? I use the ell; it is more modern than the house and suits my needs; also it faces south and I get all the sun.'

She ignored the fact that the house was hardly habitable. She led the way and opened the door. Her step was sprightly, she moved quickly. The open door revealed a large, comfortable kitchen, clean and homelike. She placed a rocker and then seated herself in a big slat-backed armchair, still retaining her cane.

I found it rather hard to begin, but managed to ask, 'Do you live here in this lonesome spot all alone?'

She nodded. There was a smile in her shrewd old eyes as she said, 'Stevens sent you, didn't he?'

It appeared that Miss Charity had won the first skirmish. Both laughed, the smoke of battle cleared, and I began again.

'Yes, and I'm glad I came. Won't you listen to him and to me and to all your friends and be taken care of this winter?'

'Taken care of,' she expostulated. 'Why? I have always taken care of myself, and, in my lifetime, a good many other people, too. No! I don't need to go and be taken care of — not yet!'

'But it's lonely,' I protested.

'To city folks, yes. I was born here and lived here most a hundred years. Lonesome? Not to me. I should be homesick and lonesome anywheres else, but never here. My winter's wood is in the shed. I've canned a lot. I have my hens, my dog, my cat. Will they take my family at the Poor Farm?' She laughed a cheery laugh.

'You don't understand; no one understands. Can't you see I am fighting a fight, a battle against the fingers of the wilderness; — they are always extended, always sowing seeds, always clutching, and I am all there is left to fight

the fight. They don't understand, those here, Stevens and the rest; I think you will understand.' She paused. 'Why is it always a woman who is the last tenant in these abandoned farms? It is! The men get through, throw up the battle, desert, and let the forest come. *I* don't. After me it will come, but not until I go. Why do I feel so — so — let's see, yes, belligerent, that's the word! (I taught school once, you see.) I mean full of fight.

'My people came here from Eastward in 1765 — my father's grandfather and his young wife. He fought the forest, he cleared the land, he built a log house; his son cleared more land, built the main house. My father held it. My brothers went to war and never came back. This town sent more men to war than all its present population. I taught school and then cared for my father and mother. I have lived here alone for nearly twenty years. I'll see it through! I have seen forty acres of good farmland fade into forest. It doesn't go overnight, you know. But the minute you stop fighting, it creeps upon you. First the hill pastures — you see a little sheep laurel, a little sweet fern, a

little ground juniper, a savin or two — next year a few birches in the fence corners; they are the forest's spies. Then the pines, pasture pines at first, then white pines — and so your pasture becomes a woodlot. Then in natural order your mowing becomes pasture, your ploughed land mowing, and always the wilderness is advancing. I know! Winter nights, when the wind blows, it plays on the great trees as one plays an organ. But it is always triumphant music, the music of victory, the wilderness claiming its kingdom. I have heard it, I know. No, I'll stay! You noticed no sprouts or saplings, no juniper or fern in the home-close about the house. No! That is *my* kingdom, my battlefield. I'm ninety-six, but I'll not desert!'

What could I say? I looked about the room — a little shelf of books between the windows and on a little stand, the Bible. 'You read?' I asked.

'A little — mostly my Bible, mostly the psalms. They were made for old people, I think. Every day I read the "Shepherd's Psalm." Of course I know it by heart, but I open to it. Then the "Habitation Psalm," and

sometimes when it storms I find comfort in the "Out of the depths" psalm.'

'Which?' I asked and she took the book and read 'De Profundis.'

The little bowed figure in the door, a warm handclasp, a quavering voice, but yet a challenge in it, which said, 'It has seemed good to see you. Promise you'll come again. I can fight better if I know you are coming.'

Five years after, I drove down the country road. The road kept company with the brook and tunneled the overarching trees. I turned the buggy up the lane. The old place was tenantless. Miss Charity had passed on the spring after my former visit. The old house was going. The roof had gone in places, one chimney was down, the windows were shattered, and in the little home-close, the fingers of the forest had planted junipers, fern, sheep laurel, and pine. Already the birches grew in amongst the old lilac bushes. And now unheard the winter wind would play its pæan of triumph upon the great branches of the bending pines. The wilderness had claimed its own.

II

TOOK CARE OF

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking.
WHITMAN

WHEN one's 'best dress' has been and is one's *only* best dress, it is but natural that such a garment is cherished with reverence. Not that it was a wonderful gown — black alpaca, cut full, as was the bountiful fashion of the seventies, severely plain — but it had served its purpose for over forty years. And now Aunt Ann decided it was to be an everyday dress. So she sat there in her rocking-chair, very stiff and prim, but firm and resolute, for Aunt Ann had developed a spirit of revolt. No longer would she be concerned about the cleanliness of the kitchen floor, or bother about the endless assortment of dishes which accumulated thrice daily for some one to wash and wipe and put away; beds could remain unmade — *Aunt Ann was through!* She had so announced yesterday and, having delivered her ultimatum, retired to her room, opened the lower drawer of her bureau,

took out a bundle pinned up in a white sheet, and presto! the best dress came forth. Never had she dared wear this garment, in all the forty-odd years of its being, save at funerals, and during some of the years of her life, 'buryin's' had come thick and fast.

So all day she had sat in her room, adorned in her best, sat and primly rocked. She had gone to her meals, it is true, but hurried back to the sanctuary of her room and the rocking-chair. And now, to-day, she knew there would be a caller, one who would inquire into the reason of the revolt, and she waited, a rather disdainful smile on her face.

Then came the expected knock, and she bowed with serenity as the caller came in; from her formal and dignified attitude she deflected not one iota. In state, the best dress as an armor for aged dignity, she received her caller.

'My, but you're dressed up, Aunt Ann!'

'Yes, from now on I'm always going to be.'

'No more help?' the caller queried.

'No!' the monosyllable was snapped out.

'Is that fair?'

'Yes! Ain't it time? How long should a body

work? Is there never to be a time of rest and best alpacas? If I'm to rest ever, it must be from now on.' This was delivered serenely and in measured tones. She would not weaken, although she began to wonder at the courage she had somehow acquired; she would see it through.

'You're too young to quit, Aunt Ann. Just a few years longer, a little help here in the hard places, and then the best dress and the folded hands.'

'Go on,' she taunted; 'the best dress and folded hands and a handful of people saying, "Her smile is natural." Oh! I've heard it at many funerals where I've helped. Perhaps you don't know it; you haven't looked me up in the book. If you had you would know I should have quit years ago. I know I don't look my age — stout folks seldom do after seventy, but I'm eighty-four. Isn't it time I quit? If I am ever to sit and rock and rest, isn't it from now on? Fourteen years I'm living on borrowed time. So I'm through!'

She paused, looked out the window, saw the near-lying meadow, and beyond, the low cape

foothills. A tear welled to her eye and slowly rolled down her wrinkled cheek. The spirit of revolt was gone, she was in retreat; she was a woman again and wept. With effort she controlled her emotion and quite calmly said:

'I want to be took care of, only that.'

And the caller said, 'Tell me all about it, Aunt Ann'; and laid a kindly hand upon her shoulder.

''Tain't as if I'd ever seen better days, as some have who come to the Poor Farm. I've always been poor and misfortunate. My father was poor — desperate poor; we was fishing folks and you know what that means. Always a lack, always some reason why the catch warn't good. It's different now, but in my childhood fishing and poverty run hand in hand. I was the oldest of ten and on me fell the care of nine — I never had no childhood. I always had care and trouble and almost starvation. What do you or any one who ain't been through it know of poverty?' she paused, and her mouth settled into a hard line. 'No money, no food, worn clothes, father at sea, mother sick, no doctor, and all coming on Ann — Ann eight or ten or

twelve years old with no schoolin' — couldn't be spared. Do you wonder I ran away at seventeen and got married to get away from it? Get away from it! I was in worse; I became the mother of many children and many died. My husband meant well, but he, too, was a fisherman and we lacked all that we should have had. Why, we were so poor that when one baby died we had nothing with which to pay for the buryin'. My husband made the little coffin; I lined it with my only whole sheet and at night we carried it to the buryin'-ground. We warn't pious people, not church folks as most are, so we just stood up side by side and held hands, and I know I asked God to take the baby and do well by him and I guess my husband asked the same. My man died and I worked to keep the children going, but them as was good all died and the others married and multiplied.

'For seventy years, yes, more, I've been aimlessly wandering, but the path has been always uphill, never any level stretches, never any hand stretched out to help me over the rough places. It was *my* hand that was stretched back apullin' some one else. Nobody ever

seemed to care for me. I was always "Aunt Ann" — Ann who took care of herself and her children and her children's children. No one ever asked me if I was tired, if I was spent, if I wanted help. And always the path went up and up 'til it seemed I must be at the top and there must be a place to rest for me. There was! Here! At the Poor Farm. And always, for seventy-five years, children's fingers have been tugging at my skirts, babies' fingers that somehow you can't unfasten, that somehow must be allowed to tug, and now — now — Oh! I want to be took care of; only that! Can't you understand?'

She rocked back and forth, back and forth, smoothing the white apron with her wrinkled hands.

'Yes, Aunt Ann, I understand,' the caller said. 'You see you have somehow wandered away from us all, going up and up, over the low hills, until at last you have gained the mountain-tops, where so few of us ever get. And then you are on the highest peak among the clouds, and so near to the God who has taken such good care of the baby. It is because you are so far above

us all and are hidden by the clouds that we have lost sight of you. And now we all want to do what we can for you. We want to take care of you, Aunt Ann.'

She resumed: 'I felt you'd understand if you knew, but I don't know nothin' 'bout mountains, I never saw one. What do I want? I want a long and lingerin' sickness at the last. I want to lay on a clean, white bed in a pleasant room and look out onto the low hills. I have never seen the snow-topped mountains hidden in the clouds. My mountains have been these little hills. I want a nurse to care for me, in a blue uniform with a great white "apun" and a "teeny" cap. She will open the door softly every morning and say, "Good-morning, dear Aunt Ann," and, although it rains outdoors, there will be sunshine within. You've seen such folks? I want my victuals on a tray and a real white napkin, even if I never had such before. I want a vase of flowers — real flowers — not the kind folks have in home gardens and settin'-room windows, but the kind that's bought for real funerals — roses, tuberoses and such, that smell so sweet, and whose odor clings

in closed-up parlors weeks and weeks after the buryin's over. And I want to linger and linger and have folks ask after me, "if I had a good night," and "if I take nourishment," and if "I'm wastin' away!" Now you understand, I — I want to be took care of — only that.'

Only a few months after, they wrote the caller that Aunt Ann had passed on. To-day as well as usual, and in the night came the Reaper. She never had her 'lingerin'' illness. She never had anything that most of us consider desirable. Perhaps Saint Peter has special haloes that match black alpaca dresses of the style of the seventies. Who knows?

III

ROSALIE

And every herb that sips the dew.
Il Penseroso

ROSALIE! How strange, that for once a name suited the nature of its owner! What happy and perhaps prophetic coincidences begot it? Maybe it was Monsieur le Curé of some little parish beyond Quebec, a kind old man, who, being asked to suggest a name, heard the tapping of the rose blossoms against the vestry windows — flowers nodding in the June breeze — and, taking it as a sign from heaven, called the child 'Rosalie.' But all that was years ago, the old Curé had been laid at rest, and Rosalie, who never really grew up, journeyed to the States with her people.

When I first knew her, she was dependent and nearly eighty, but still a child — wandering in the meadows and woodlands, gathering the flowers and herbs. 'My infants,' 'my little ones,' she called them. 'They talk to me, the daisies, the buttercups, the honeysuckle, asking

me to gather them. Ah, who knows where the first wind flower blows, who brings home the last aster and gentian, who finds the cardinal flower? Who? Rosalie. Who gathers the herbs, bloodroot, crane's-bill, tansy, rue, and the great, velvet leaves of the pasture mullein? Who knows how to brew them and for what illness each is a cure? Who? I answer only Rosalie.' Up at dawn and to the fields and brookside, through the pastures and woodlands, always singing snatches of old childhood songs, always cheery, laughing — so through the summer days walked Rosalie.

They never restrained her — Gabriel and his wife, dear people, who looked upon her as the playmate of their little child, Yvette. They were all very happy in their life at the Town Farm. But the trouble came because of that ogre 'M'sieur l'Inspecteur.' Why did he not understand? He was dense, he was not human. The idea! Why! He had protested because of Rosalie's bedroom and its contents. How was one to dry herbs, and many kinds of herbs, too, unless they depended from strings stretched from wall to wall? Did not M'sieur know that? Did he not know that herbs must be watched

while drying? That mullein took longer than mint to dry and had to be tied in smaller bundles and turned from day to day? My! he was dense, M'sieur! And it was all so healthful to sleep in the atmosphere of drying herbs! Had he never smelled the incense in the church? Here in Rosalie's room there was perpetual incense. It was to Rosalie a whiff of heaven. 'Oh, M'sieur, how droll you are! Fire! you say — but ma fo! I nevair smoke, I nevair have a light, I go to bed with the sun, I get up with the last star fading in the west. M'sieur does not understand, they are my children. It is with love I gather them, with love I brew them for my afflictions, each helps me.'

But 'M'sieur l'Inspecteur' was quite like a stone and deaf to appeal. 'If these got on fire, it would be serious for all here,' he had said. Then came little Yvette. 'Ah, M'sieur — poor Rosalie, she is but a child, like me, with her children. She is heart-broken, she weeps, sobbing, "Mes enfants! oh! my little ones, Ogre! He has no heart, only a *little* authority, Mon Dieu! it is terrible!" Please, M'sieur, for me, for Rosalie.'

And because M. l'Inspecteur had a heart and the heart bled for Rosalie, he gave them a month or two to transfer the lines of drying herbs to the attic and then, quite sad-hearted, because of the tears of the children, Rosalie and Yvette, departed.

The Great War came and its attendant preparation. Herbert Hoover leaped into the Nation's eye and his programme of conservation became the Nation's creed; save; conserve everything!

So the months drifted by, and then one day came M'sieur l'Inspecteur, unannounced, as always. Gabriel and his wife and little Yvette met him at the door, a handshake for the couple, a kiss on each cheek for Yvette, and then, silence. Yvette was searching and evidently finding the object of her quest vanished.

So down the long hall came the Ogre, M'sieur l'Inspecteur, stopping from door to door, visiting with this and that one, asking his questions, laughing or condoling, as the case might be.

And then he came to Rosalie's door and knocked; a very decided voice said 'Enter,'

and he saw the same room, the same strings of herbs, the same odor of incense, the same Rosalie — and he said, rather sadly, I fear:

'Oh, Rosalie, I'm sorry. I find the dried herbs here as usual and I asked you to put them in the attic and now I'm disappointed in you, Rosalie.'

Yvette stood very close to Rosalie and held her gown. The child trembled — a questioning look in her black eyes. But Rosalie smiled and began:

'Ah, once more we have the honor to entertain M'sieur l'Inspecteur. I am happy,' and bobbed a little curtsey. 'I know M'sieur that "mes herbes" are here, as always, but why, you ask? Well, ask not me — no! ask the great M'sieur Hoovair, he who says, save! conserve! waste nothing! feed Europe! save! Ah, M'sieur, I, Rosalie, save — it is but a little. I am very old and poor and I say, "What can Rosalie save to help win the awful war?" and I think and then I say, "mes enfants," "my little ones." I will conserve them and I have done so! See, here is the paper Yvette reads to me, here is the picture of the great Herbert Hoovair and all

that he says. But we cannot find the picture of M'sieur l'Inspecteur, the great l'Inspecteur, and so I say to Gabriel and to his wife and to Yvette and now to you, who is the greatest man — M'sieur Herbert Hoovair, who says "save" and so wins the great war, or M'sieur l'Inspecteur who bids me destroy my little ones, mes enfants?'

Well! The lines stayed up, the herbs depended as ever, incense filled the air, Yvette wept — Rosalie wept — the Ogre clasped her hand and patted her shoulder.

She is gone now. Yvette is a young lady, and it was she who told me how one sweet June morning she went to call Rosalie — for age came on apace and she lay later than formerly — and there she slept in her little white bed, a bouquet of June roses on the little stand beside it and the odor of incense faintly filling the room.

IV

SUNSET GLOW

IN some winter days, whose beginnings are sunshine and brightness, but whose noons see the assembling of clouds — thick, leaden, overshadowing — old people, weather-wise, bring in their wood and forecast snow. And then, just before day closes, the clouds break and the sun for one brief moment bursts forth, ruddying all the winter landscape and the snow-packed clouds reflect the crimson and gold, long after the sun has set, and night comes down.

Patty was lonely that first day at the Town Farm. It had all been most unusual. You see, finally, there had been no money and without it, how is one to live? Patty knew, of course, that the little fund was slowly melting away and so she economized. First, she told the milk-man she would not want her pint of milk every other day. She ate her oatmeal and rice with salt, in place of milk and sugar. She was very

sparing of her tea. Butter she had given up months ago. Finally, it came down to a rice diet thrice daily, rice with salt and then — then — the money was gone, and so there was no more rice and no more wood and Captain Wright, of the Overseers, took her to the Town Farm.

When you have saved and pinched for years, when you have stayed in bed late and gone to bed early in order to save wood, when you have had to stay in most of the winter, because your shoes leaked and were very old, when you have denied yourself everything so that your little store would 'see you through,' and then the one thing you fought against had become a reality — why, you just got a bit bewildered, discouraged, and wondered if prayers were really answered. And all this coming when you were past seventy-eight too! At that time in your life when the fighting days are over.

It was, therefore, lonely the first day. She had a pleasant room facing west and beyond the highway, the meadows, and beyond the meadows, the hills. Captain Wright had been kind about her few keepsakes and she had placed them about; a photograph of her birth-

place, with her brother standing in front holding the family horse. The picture had yellowed. She had brought her most comfortable rocker, too, the one with the patchwork cushion.

Now she sat in the rocker, with the rug spread out on her lap. But her needle was idle. Her eyes were looking out over the meadow to the western hills, toward which the sun was slowly setting. She was wondering just what was the use of finishing the rug. Rugs were for a home. She now had none. Rugs might be given to friends, but all her friends had gone on. She turned it over and over in her mind — what was the use now? Wasn't the fight all over, and so why the rug?

She was one of those old, little women; by nature cheery. Her hair was very white, her eyes were very dark brown, and for all her years she was quite sprightly. The other women did not interest her; they were all foreign-born and seemed apart from her. She had sat in the sitting-room at first and had learned that Ireland, Scotland, and England were wonderful places, much more wonderful than Massachusetts and Pleasantown. 'Why,

the Gap of Dunloe — there's nothing like it in the wide world!' 'Save, Loch Lamond, remember that.' 'Aye, but May in England, May in England . . . !'

Like a little shadow she had vanished and come back into her own room, and somehow Pleasantown, where she and all her folks had been born, seemed more her home than ever.

But at supper Seth spoke to her. Holding out both hands and taking hers, he had said: 'Why, Patty, I'm glad.' And she had looked at him and said very simply, 'Seth Foster, you seem like my own folks.' She didn't say that they had been schoolmates at Number 4 School; that both had sung in the choir at the church, out of the same book, too; that she would have married him had he asked her; that she waited, but he never asked her nor any one else, for he had an invalid mother and young sister to care for; that she had married Henry Pierce, who was always 'one of those unfortunate men.' For Henry the unfortunate she had labored and slaved till at the last she closed his eyes and folded his hands.

As the days ran on, she saw more of Seth. It

was the custom of summer evenings for the old people to sit by the orchard bars and watch the automobiles go by on the great State road, and however the rest might fraternize, Patty and Seth sat apart and talked of all they knew, the friends in the life behind them. And it came to them, that out of it all, only these two remained, the rest laid 'under the wide and starry sky.'

The years had dealt roughly with Seth. There had been the mother, bedridden and hard to care for; there had been the sister, whose body grew to womanhood, but whose mind never emerged from the days of childhood — at sixty she still played with her dolls. Seth had cared for both and buried them. His had been a life of sacrifice, and when illness had come to him, he had come to the Farm. Here he became Seth the dependable. It was Seth who salted the cattle on the hill pasture; it was Seth who locked the poultry house and each night counted the turkeys as they wandered back to roost in the trees by the barn; it was Seth who guarded the grain chests.

Three books he had brought with him — the

Bible his mother had given him when it had been his endeavor to enlist, but was rejected because of his lameness; the 'Surveyor's Handbook,' for it had always been his ambition to become a civil engineer; and a well-thumbed copy of Palgrave's 'Golden Treasury.' For, shall we confess it, Seth leaned toward Parnassus and, what is more, he could read verse well.

Thus, when they journeyed forth — these two, Seth and Patty — to the plateau back of the house, it was safe to say that Palgrave ballasted one of Seth's coat pockets.

Mary Murphy — she who sang the praises of the Gap of Dunloe (for there she was born), daughter of a romantic race, 'twas Mary Murphy who drew the matron one side in the corridor and said, 'Whist! The little feller with the "bow 'n arrer" do be awful busy these long evenings at the Farm.' She said just that as an oracle might have spoken, and then disappeared into the sanctuary of her own room.

'Little feller with the "bow 'n arrer,"' the matron mused over the expression and, finally, having at one time in her youth received a

valentine, with the aforesaid 'little feller' on it, awoke to the fact that the snows of eighty years cannot quench love. Patty had come in April, violet time. Laurel time followed, then the grass was cut, and the second crop was spattered with ox-eyed daisies or black-eyed Susans. An early frost and the flowers were gone. Nevertheless, one October day, Seth returned from the hill pasture bearing a bouquet of immortelles, and, with a quaint, rustic gallantry, presented them to the little old lady who stood by the door. 'Oh, Life Everlastin'!' she exclaimed as she took them, patting the little dry blossoms lovingly.

'Tho't you'd remember 'em — used to dye 'em red to put in the church wreaths. They looked — were — Christian, I guess.'

She put them in a vase on her dresser. Twenty would have given orchids; forty, roses; sixty, I know not what, rue, perhaps; eighty gave Life Everlasting.

It was about this time that Seth made the memorable visit to Captain Wright, of the Board of Overseers. The old man sat long in the office waiting his turn and was startled when

the Captain's grating voice rasped out, 'Now, Seth, what is it?'

Seth sat twirling his old felt hat. He had rehearsed this scene for days and now it had all come very suddenly for his eighty years; twice he cleared his throat and then finally: 'I ain't ever been married, Captain.'

Wright cut him short with 'Well, you're lucky.' Fifty years of Wright's life had been spent taming a shrew, who still persisted in being untamed.

But Seth went on: 'I am lonely; it is only for a few years, perhaps months, and I want some one who is interested in me.'

Wright laughed. 'Just ordinary crazy, Seth, I call it.'

'No, lonely, Captain. 'Tain't as if she were a stranger. I've known her always and once she waited for me; but I'd my duty to mother and Sarah then, and now —'

'Your duty's to this town and it won't stand for any such thing. Women! Women! Why, every case that comes to me has a woman mixed up in it, I tell you!'

'Yes,' the old man remarked, 'women are re-

sponsible for it all. You see, our mothers, Captain, were women. Some of us always blame 'em. Somehow it's been my lot to just look after 'em; to take care of 'em, and thank God I had the privilege!'

Then came the present scribe, who, Mary Murphy said, was 'soaked in authoriety,' and Patty told him all about it — sitting in her rocking-chair, with the patchwork cushion, sitting and sewing on the once-neglected rug, now hopefully brought out again. And the 'authoriety' — he wished he was young and daring again and could throw care and responsibility to the winds — wished he could gather the little old lady with the white hair and sweet brown eyes into his arms and whisper in her ear:

'Yes, to-night. Be at the orchard bars, you and Seth. I'll be there with a big car, forty miles to State line and let them follow — Captain Wright and an army, if need be. We'll lead. And to-morrow you and Seth will be receiving congratulations.'

But middle age is cautious. And romance usually (more's the pity) dies when welfare

work steps in, so the visitor — a craven I say, and so do you say — just looked wise and admonished all people to yield to those in authority and slunk away.

November. Patty was ailing. The doctor said it was useless to come, 'Heart, you know.' The matron called Seth that afternoon and he tiptoed into the sick-room.

'I thought it fair,' she said afterwards to me. 'I went in with him, and Patty sat propped up in her chair and because my eyes were weak and the sun glow was strong, I came out. My husband and I stood in the sitting-room and watched the sunset. It had been such a cold, cloudy day and now, just before sunset, the sun broke through — a flood of light — then it went down. Then old Seth came in. He looked pale and sick. He said, very simply, "Patty's gone," and we heard his uneven footfalls trail off down the long corridor."

V

IVAN THE LOVABLE

Something the heart must have to cherish.

JUST to-day I happened to read the quotation, 'God could not be everywhere, therefore he made mothers,' and my thoughts wandered back to Ivan and I wondered what had become of his mother.

Ten or a dozen years ago, travelers who journeyed into the hill towns were forced to patronize large livery stables, maintaining, in some instances, as many as forty horses. With the advent of automobiles, the livery business decreased and to-day hardly any of these stables, as such, survive.

Grandpa Hurd owned an interest in one of these stables and was usually to be found, on pleasant mornings, sitting in the big stable-door welcoming trade. Hurd was a keen Yankee, well past seventy-five, a good judge of horse-flesh and human nature and an equine lover. In his employ I found one Ivan, a Russian, who had been in this country some ten years. Most

of the time he had spent in Hurd's employ, as hostler and driver.

'He's honest,' Hurd said. 'Ain't afraid of work and hard trips and he likes hosses. He's near, just near; he's got the first blade of grass that grew in the Garden of Eden.'

I had often heard of men who were so 'near' that they possessed the first drop of water that came over Niagara Falls, but never had I heard of one who cherished grass from the first garden, and so I told Hurd.

'Well,' he came back, 'that's all right for a Yankee, but Ivan is Rooshun. A Yankee gets in on the ground floor, but the Rooshun starts in the cellar.'

I am free to confess I liked Ivan. He was a pleasant companion on a long trip, he was a good driver and careful of his team, and besides, he enjoyed the road and never grumbled if darkness shut down before he made home. His special pleasure were the all-day jaunts, entailing a dinner at one of the hill taverns (at his customer's expense) and possibly a supper to boot.

His appetite was robust and Russian. Then,

after a meal of soup and several helpings of beef and sundry vegetables, squares of thickly buttered bread, a half of a pie, and numerous cups of tea, he was ready for the road again. I wondered where he stowed all the substance, and then I remembered the map of Russia and how vast and empty its interior was, and so ceased wondering.

After such a meal he would let out his belt several holes, settle himself in the buggy, gather up the reins, chirrup to his horses, and so we were off. He was blessed with a wonderful disposition, for he was always good-natured, in fact, usually bubbling over with merriment. His laugh was contagious. He would throw back his head and emit roars which echoed through the woodlands. Occasionally he would break into song — he had a good baritone. 'This,' he would say after a little snatch of melody, 'is a song we used to sing at weddings'; or, 'It's a dance — very hard to do'; or, 'At harvest, when we are through, we sing this.' Of course these songs were Russian, and the music in many instances was wild, even barbaric.

Once we passed the lone figure of a man hoeing in a field, and Ivan said: 'In Russia we work together and play as we work; we sing and at noon we dance. Here everybody is all alone and work is never play. Perhaps that's why they sell the farms so cheap.' I drew him out as to his boyhood and Russia. Always his family had had the eternal fight against famine. With a good harvest, only a small amount of wood dust went into the bread, but in the lean years, the quantity was increased. He told of his home, the big living-room and its great tile stove, so large that several slept upon it; told of the long, idle winter when, to save food, the family slept day and night.

At last he got to the subject nearest his heart — his mother. 'She gave me this the day I left,' he said, producing a medal which hung about his neck. He handled it reverently and let it slip back upon his breast. Four times a year he sent a draft to her, all he could spare, for he was saving to buy a farm and make a home for her and his younger brother who was still at home. 'My letters and the drafts make her very happy. She is very pious and prays

for me always. And who knows; perhaps her prayers hold my job, who knows? If any one could get the ear of God, it is the little mother, that I know.' She could not write, so the brother wrote, but it was always just as the little mother said, her words.

Years ago, when he had sent her the first draft, she had written him of its reception. I could see the trembling, old hands tear open the envelope; then she waited patiently while Ivan's brother read all he had written; then she called for it again. Timidly she touched the little white paper, the draft. This meant plenty in place of penury; warmth, food, clothing; and this, this was Ivan. So the brother brought a light and touched it to the candles that sat on the stand below the holy ikon, and between them she laid the little white paper and both knelt before the ikon — to the peasant mind the semblance of God — and she prayed that the God of all the Russians would stretch forth his hands across the sea and in the shadow of that mighty hand might in safety abide Ivan, the good son. All this he told me as the horses toiled up the long hill and all this I saw as he

told it. He had never told Grandpa Hurd, hence the Eden herbage conjecture — and now I knew why Ivan was 'near.'

It would seem that the Czar, the Little Father, took a personal interest in Ivan, for when war was rumored with Japan, the Little Father wrote for Ivan to come home and fight for Russia. But my friend had taken out his first papers and wrote the Little Father a very long and courteous letter in explanation. And when Russia was beaten, Ivan informed me that had he and a cousin — living in Pittsfield — gone home to the Army, the result would have been otherwise; and he said it with sincerity, such was his egotism.

With the advent of the automobile and the passing of the stable, I lost sight of Ivan and for several years did not see him at all. The war came, stayed and passed. And then came the day when I stepped from a trolley car at the end of the line and ran plump into Ivan. The man was greatly changed; he was now past forty and already turning gray. He seized both my hands and I was afraid of a Continental salute; — but Ivan had taken out his final

papers and was an American now. He was on his own little farm, doing well.

'Married?' I asked him.

'No; you see I still wait for the little mother; — I wait, I wait. My brother was killed and the little mother is alone. I have not heard for over a year; but who knows? To-morrow, maybe. I got no letter to-day. The last letter I got — I have it — I want to read it to you.'

And so, seated on the stone wall, he took out an old wallet from which he extracted a folded brown paper. This he undid and produced the letter. I wish I could write it as it really was, word for word — that cry of a hungry soul.

From all the chaos that is Russia, she told him of her trials, of her loneliness, of the famine and want and heartlessness. She spoke of the old days under the Czar when they complained, but now it was infinitely worse. For really those had been happier days, holier days, for all the children were at home. Ivan was there then. But now his letters and drafts did not get through; he must not come for her because they would kill him. But the one out-

standing cross was the destruction of the village church.

'And then they came on here to me, a widow, I knew them — (who are they to be placed in authority over us?) bursting into my home and I alone. They tore my ikon, my holy ikon, from the wall and ground it beneath their feet on the stone floor, cursed me and left me disconsolate. There is the little white square upon the wall, pure and white, where the ikon hung. Before it we have prayed, Ivan my son, you and I, and before it I have prayed for you, Ivan my son. And now it is gone! They have taken my consolation and left me desolate, they have forbidden me to love my God! *What will they give me in the place of my holy ikon?* What? Something I must have to pray to, something that is the semblance of God. Still I pray to the unseen God for you, O Ivan, my son!'

He folded the letter back in its wrapping, placed it tenderly in the wallet. 'So,' he said, 'I wait, wait for the little mother. I shall hear, some one will write for her and then she will come to my little farm. I wait — for what else can I do?'

VI

CONCERNING TOMMY

IF you were born deaf and dumb and have to journey through life hearing naught and saying naught, your burden is hard; if you were born club-footed, so that walking is a difficult task, also your burden is hard; but just what would you call it, if you had laid upon you the burdens of all these afflictions?

Tommy's father had been dead many years. His mother called him Tommy. He was always Tommy to her, her little boy who never grew up, and like many mothers of afflicted children she was loyal and loving to him. They lived in a country town, on a little farm. And because the farm was remote and Tommy lame, and the school far, he never went there.

There was a wonderful understanding between these two, and both were happy in the companionship of each other. The mother worked the farm and Tommy was no drone. And so all might have been well had it pleased

Providence to call Tommy first, but it was the mother who was summoned. The neighbors knew she was ill and did what they could; and always sitting beside the bed, holding the work-worn hand he loved, was Tommy. He was now forty years old, and the strange turn in their affairs was quite incomprehensible to his childish mind. Why did all these people come, now? Why was she always in bed? Who was the man with the black bag? What did it mean? She had never lain there so long before; he could not understand.

Then came the night when the hand he held failed to give back the clasp; the eyes were open, but saw him not, she made no sound. It was so the neighbors found him and led him away — into a blank world — useless now. He seemed to sense that she had gone. It is probable that his mind grasped the meaning of death, for he must have seen it in his farm life. And so they buried her.

Now you must know that in every community people are busy with their own affairs, and officials do not act until the law allows. Therefore, the neighbors, good kindly folk, but

not living close at hand, each thinking that some one else should make the move, made no attempt to provide for the lonely and unfortunate mute left solitary in his mother's home. After his mother's passing he shunned every one, hiding when a visitor came; to pay for the funeral and other expenses they took the cow and hens. Somehow he knew that the little brown and silver disks and green paper that his mother had hidden would buy something to eat, and he left these under a stone, perhaps, for the weekly call of the grocery-boy, and the boy left what he felt Tommy needed.

So this horrible, lonely existence dragged on. One can picture the poor childish-minded man, dazed and bruised, wandering at night through the familiar rooms of the old farmhouse, unable even to articulate his grief. One can picture the aimless days spent in hobbling from house to barn and from barn to pasture, the dread to return to the loneliness of the old house, and yet the necessity to do so when evening fell. He became an unkempt, disheveled shadow of a man, ill-nourished, wild-eyed, breaking under the strain of this unnatural existence. At last

the town woke up, and brought him to the Town Farm. Robinson Crusoe was never as lonely on his island as was poor Tommy there, where all was so different and so strange. He was unhappy in companionship, because he had never had companionship; so he kept by himself and sat all day apart, brooding, wondering, waiting for the little mind-thread to snap.

Eliza was the Town Farm matron, the wife of the warden. She was a buxom, jolly, good-natured young woman interested in her work, and keenly alive to the best interests of her inmate family. The coming of Tommy added a new type to the people under her charge. She already had one or two mental defectives, the usual quota of cripples and aged, but here was a man; a mute, defective mentally and crippled. And because the hand of God had been laid so heavily upon the unfortunate creature, her heart went out to him.

She watched him carefully, but as the days passed she began to feel that this must eventually be a case for the asylum. This disturbed Eliza, and as she worked or cared for her little

baby she wondered how she could be of real help to the poor childish, crippled mute.

It was her custom to lay her little child in its carriage and wheel it out onto the big piazza in the morning, so that the baby could sleep in the open air. From time to time, she would come out of the kitchen into the front room and look out the window to make sure the child was safe.

One morning as she approached the window she saw that some one was standing over the carriage looking down at the sleeping child. Her heart stopped and then pounded on when she recognized the bent figure as Tommy. Her first impulse was to scream, but she waited. She saw him put out his hand and just touch with one of his fingers the child's hands. Then he sat down beside the carriage; his back was against one of the pillars that support the roof, but he could still see the baby's face. Long she watched and then finally went out to bring the carriage in. She took the baby up — it was still asleep — and held her for Tommy to see. Was it a flicker of a smile on that immobile face, or was it just her imagination?

So it became a custom, every morning the

carriage on the piazza, every morning the mute watching beside it. Once when she looked out she saw that the baby's hand hung over the edge of the carriage. She saw the man take it tenderly, hold it a minute, and then put it back, covering the child. There came a day when the baby awoke and put out her little hands to Tommy and he held them and rapped on the piazza floor with his cane. That was the day that little Eliza was introduced to little Tommy, the day when for him the sun came out and the clouds faded away.

Thus it continued, this wonderful comradeship. The mother allowed him to wheel the carriage down the road a bit and back. Stump, stump, stump, down to the old willow tree, then a smile at the baby and a gurgle from her, and stump, stump, stump, back again to the house. The child adored the fragment of a man; she sat in his lap, her little fingers stroked his face, she wept when separated from him, and he wept in turn. And because he wanted always to be near her, he took up a routine of work in the old kitchen. Doubtless his mother had laid the foundation of this in their old home life.

Tommy became an asset to the communal life of the Town Farm.

Once when the baby persisted in some childish fault, the mother gently slapped the little hand and the child wept. Suddenly she was confronted by an infuriated Tommy, inarticulately shouting, as the dumb do, gesticulating, and pointing toward the weeping child. Eliza was frightened. Perhaps the Frankenstein she had created would break bounds. But in an instant it all passed and he sank down on the floor beside the baby, weeping, weeping silently, convulsively, a pathetic figure of woe.

I like to remember him as just a happy boy who had somewhere found a baby sister to love and worship, a happy boy with a face that radiated happiness, when the baby put out her hands to him. It was thus Tommy found himself through the love of a little child and the courage of the child's mother.

VII

THE WIFE OF THE KING OF THE WORLD

THIS is a sad story; perhaps you charge me with writing sad stories about almshouse people, and so I answer, yes, some of the stories are sad, for you must remember that it is sad to be dependent in old age, sad to see one's friends desert or die, sad to grow old. Sometimes we idealize old age; we quote Rabbi Ben Ezra and vizualize, seeing a bright fire upon the hearth, a comfortable wing chair occupied by a hale and hearty octogenarian who, possessing all his faculties, loves to 'reminisce' as the country people are pleased to call it. But this is the idealized old age. Kingsley has put it better in his verses beginning: 'When all the world is young, lad.'

The Town Farm at Riverton stood by the sea. From the front you saw the blue water stretching miles to eastward and the horizon, you saw the glistening sand dunes that partly

encompassed the little bay; from the back of the house the pasture hills in the distance, and nearer, the great meadows dotted with haystacks. It was a comfortable house and harbored the usual almshouse family of 'misfortunate' and aged people.

If you went up the back stairs that led from the kitchen, you found yourself in a little hallway; from this hallway opened two doors, one to the right and one to the left. You opened the right-hand door and entered a little white room whose two windows look out over the waters of the bay and so toward the open sea. There was a little white bed in this room, a little white bed with an immaculate spread and pillows as white as snow. This was the room of Mary Bassett and she lay in the little white bed; an aged and frail woman strikingly beautiful, whose hair was as white as the pillow upon which it lay, whose face was as white as the spread upon the little bed, whose eyes were as dark as the little pools one finds in the deep woods, as deep and as unfathomable. Such was the frail, aged creature, Mary Bassett, who lay in the little room whose windows overlooked

the sea. And this is her story as told by an old man who knew and who remembered.

John Bassett was a fisherman and sailed from Gloucester. If you are a native you call it 'Gloshter.' Bassett made good money, considering the times, the early eighteen-fifties, and throve on the life of danger and exposure. All in all, he was an ordinary fisherman, whose home town was Riverton, a little village six or seven miles from Gloucester. Here he came between fishing trips, or when his fishing schooner was laid up. If you asked Riverton folk as to John Bassett, they would tell you he was a good fellow, save when he returned with money from a good trip, and then, 'with liquor aboard, look out!'

Once when he came back — and be it recorded to his credit that he did not tarry in the taverns at Gloucester — he encountered a strange face on the street in Riverton. She was an emigrant girl about nineteen, the possessor of a remarkable pair of brown eyes and a wealth of hair blue-black as is the wing of a raven. It is not recorded how John Bassett and Mary Hearn met; such things just happen in small

places such as Riverton; nor is it recorded how long the fisherman and the emigrant girl kept company, but their marriage was duly recorded and the little home where they live is, or was, standing some years ago.

Again to the great credit of Bassett, be it said that he turned over a new leaf and endeavored to fight shy of the taverns of Gloucester and those who frequented them. Such, we are told, are the ways of bridegrooms, and especially bridegrooms who have been so fortunate as to wed beautiful brides. And if we may believe tradition and the statements of very old people who remembered Mary Bassett as a bride, we have no reason to question the fact that John Bassett's wife was a girl of rare and unusual beauty.

But prosperity, that evil genius which mars the lives of many simple souls, undermined all John Bassett's good resolutions. It had been a wonderful trip to the Banks. Seldom had such a haul been landed in Gloucester, and Bassett, alive with his good fortune, with his pockets filled, tarried with his boon companions in the taverns of Gloucester. Upon the nature of this

man liquor had a most singular effect. While to some it ushers in a period of depression and of natural optimists makes pessimists, to Bassett it brought directly the opposite. Because of his manner when drunk his companions had called him the 'King of the World.' His attitude was always arrogant, his nature belligerent. Once drunk he was fighting drunk, nor did it matter what blocked his path or stood in his way. So brawl succeeded brawl as the night wore on, and at midnight the tavern-keeper, being afraid of his guests and the constable, and in all probability feeling that the tide of sailors' money was at ebb, turned the roisterers into the street.

So home to Riverton trudged John Bassett, fortified with a full bottle of liquor which he carried in his pocket and from which he drank as he trod the six long miles. The jingle of his remaining earnings in his pocket inspired him — there was some left. His feelings were at the top notch of alcoholic elevation; he was not merely the 'King of the World'; he was 'The Emperor of the Universe.' He sent ambassadors to all the realms of space and demanded tribute

of the planets. He, John Bassett, was the center of the system of the universe. About him moved all nature. He was supreme!

So he came to the little home by the river — the little house lying so cozy in the dim light of the approaching dawn, and because he was the Supreme Human, he battered down the door, not waiting for his trembling wife to unbar it. Maddened by the effort and heeding not the little white figure that stood, wide-eyed and horror-stricken by the chamber door, he roared forth his chant of triumph, striking to right and left at his imaginary foes. She raised her hands in protest, weeping, and he struck her down with the bottle, now half empty. It broke and the contents spilled upon her and on the floor. She sank in a huddled heap, nor moved.

Slowly something pulled away the fog curtain that was before John Bassett's eyes and he reeled against the cottage wall. He knelt beside her, no longer the Emperor of the Universe, but plain John Bassett the fisherman; he called her name, stroked her black hair, and wept, but she did not move, and then he fled. Back over the triumphant King's Highway, now

become the thorn-paved way of remorse, back in the fast ruddying dawn to Gloucester and to the sea whence he never returned.

So, because Riverton was founded by Bassetts away back when the country was young, and because in the early eighteen-fifties nearly all its population were Bassetts or sons and daughters of Bassett mothers, the town assumed the solemn obligation: so my old friend told me 'the tender care of the wife of our kinsman and townsman John Bassett.' And for over fifty years kept faith. Children were born, grew to manhood and womanhood, mated, and died, and still Mary Bassett lived in the little white room at the poor farm. She knew no one, saw no one, spoke never a word, and for over forty years lay in her little white bed in the room that looked out over the sea — the sea that had swallowed the author of her brief happiness and her years of unkenned misery. White was her hair as the pillow upon which she laid her head, fair and white her face always so calm and serene — it might have been graved of marble — but her eyes — great, brown, wonderful eyes — looked at you and

through you and beyond you, but in their dark depths glowed no glimmer of reason.

An Epilogue by 'Lafe'

'Lafe' they called him. 'Lafayette' he had been named because he was born on the Fourth of July. Just a dory fisherman for eighty years, and when at last the infirmities of age came upon him they persuaded him to spend his winters at the Town Farm. But he always waited until after Thanksgiving and left in March. It was irksome, that long period of inactivity. He fretted for the 'bot' and the 'feel' of the tiller. I always think of him putting out to sea in the face of a coming 'nor'easter,' when all other sail were scudding for safe anchorage, the little dory with reefed sail dancing atop the cresting rollers, old Lafe at the helm, sailing eastward, to greet the rising sun.

It would have been singularly appropriate if he had simply sailed on and on into the new day, somewhere to 'east'ard' — but as it was, he died in bed.

Once he spoke of John Bassett. 'Yes, I knew him — yes — where do I think he went?

Don't know — only I hope he became a blue-water sailor — hope so! One of the crew of a full-rigged ship — hope so! — ordered aloft rounding the Horn, sails like sheet-iron in the wind and rain and cold, ropes like great icicles, footlines as slippery as the road to Hell — hope he was there — mate on deck seventy feet below yelling "Lay aloft" — Well, John Bassett clomb to the mizzen skysail a-takin' in sail — I hope so — and when the rest come down, he was not of them, he had come quicker — hope so!'

VIII

RAISIN' DATES

IT came about because of the Pelican. He talked too much and talked to the wrong person. I always had a delusion that pelicans were too busy feeding and storing food to do much talking. As usual, I am wrong, for in this case, the Pelican talked. Of course, his real name was not Pelican, for it was spelled Pelanquin, the similarity bringing to mind the bird's name. The name 'Pelican' had been conferred upon Jules Pelanquin by his erstwhile neighbor and friend, Timothy Murphy, and the nickname stuck. I knew both men at the Brownsville almshouse, where Murphy had come some six months previous to the advent of the Pelican. Friends of many years' standing they were, but it had been a very uneven friendship. That is, it suffered its ups and downs. Any friendship that clung to Timothy Murphy must have been an uneven one, and not because of the party of the second part, but because of Timothy.

Timothy had demanded an audience. Timothy evidently had a grievance, the nature of which, however, I could not fathom. So when I stepped into the smoking-room for my audience, I found Mr. Murphy alone, occupying an armchair and evidently in an anticipatory mood. I had resolved to confine myself to the strict language of diplomacy, so at the door I stood and bowed, saying:

'Mr. Timothy Murphy, I presume?'

'Your "presume" is right,' was the answer.

'Oh,' I replied. 'I'm pleased to renew an acquaintance,' and shook hands.

'You may not be so pleased when I'm through with you.'

'I understand you have a bone to pick with me, Mr. Murphy, and I'm hoping it's only a chicken bone.'

''Tis not — 'tis the hind leg of an elephant.'

'Oh, I'm relieved' (you will notice my use of the language of diplomacy), 'for it might have been the wishbone of a mastodon.'

'Never mind all that — 'tis a big bone. If I knew my "geography" as well as you do, I'd

be back at you with a dragon's backbone, but that's neither here nor there.'

'Well?' I questioned, resolving to let him state his own case in his own way.

The old man shuffled his feet, twitched his hands on the arms of his chair, cleared his throat and began:

'Do I look like a man who raises dates? I ask you that, man to man, do I?'

'No,' I answered deliberately, 'you do not look like a man who raises dates. If any one asked me what was your specialty, I should have suggested something exceedingly tropical, but not dates, even if dates are raised in hot climates.'

If I had thought for a moment that this would go over Timothy's head, the delusion was of short duration. He nodded knowingly, with a 'Yes, I know all that'; and then, bringing his huge fist down on the arm of his chair, exclaimed:

''Tis you told the Pelican I was raisin' dates.'

'Sure, Timothy?' I questioned.

'Of course; it comes down to either you or

the Pelican being a liar — and I've known the Pelican isn't one, for over twenty years.'

I vehemently protested innocence and then it dawned upon me — the conversation I had had with the Pelican on a previous visit. I had been anxious to get inmates' ideas as to the causes of dependence — 'Why has poverty come to you?' 'What one incident or habit in your life has made you dependent in your old age?' On the aftermath of my talk as to the Pelican's individual case, the conversation had switched to intemperance, thence naturally to the total abstinence societies. Why had they come? And naturally I pointed to my friend Timothy and the Pelican being French Canadian I had used the expression 'raison d'être' in relation to Timothy, meaning his type, of course. And the crafty Pelican saw his chance to stir up the Celtic disposition and the 'raison d'être' became to Timothy 'raisin' dates.' So I explained as best I could. In answer I got:

'French, is it? How is it you talk French? Ain't me and my ways plain enough to be explained in our language? Well, I accept the

apology and so go out of the date business. However, you're right. My boy Jerry and my boy Johnnie and Maggie, my daughter's husband, are all Father Matthew's Total Abstinence members and 'tis I who made them so and I'm proud of it.'

'Yes,' I put in, 'Tim, you started in to drink all the distilleries and breweries dry.'

'Well,' he came back, 'when I came here I had them all working in three eight-hour shifts. Put that down. Nevertheless,' he went on, 'I always got along with all men, save cops. I'd no use for cops, and God in his mercy, for punishment, married my daughter Maggie to a New York cop! What do you think of that for a knock-out? But he's a good feller, just the same.'

He had lighted his pipe, crossed his legs, and decided to talk; the diplomatic audience was over.

'In the old days I was what you call an occasional drinker. But, as the Pelican says, the occasions came often. I made a practice of having the brewers and distillers you mention work nights around Christmas and Easter and

Fourth of July. I did, I know, get a bit rough and turn the family out on occasion. 'Twas but a bit of fun, and then Jerry, the oldest boy, runs for the cops and the *real* fun began. Always the cops came and I kept them busy, and several times I acted as a settee for four cops while we waited for the wagon. My spec-i-al-i-ty was cops — Brownsville cops preferred. It was because of all this Jerry and Johnnie signed the pledge.

'Me? Never! I've never broken my word, drunk or sober, and I'll take no pledge I can't keep. So you're right about me being the reason; and I'm not ashamed of leading — or rather directing — my sons into the path of sobriety. Sure, every one tells you it is drink that brings men and women to the Town Farm. Is it? Well, in my case, it might have had an in-flu-ence, but sons' wives played their part.

''Twas not drink brought the Pelican here, for he never drank.

''Twas not drink brought old Mrs. Kearns, for she never drank either. Take the Pelican's case. He was in the old days a tailor. Sure, what's a tailor? It takes nine tailors to make a

man. Do you doubt me? — Look at the Pelican. Sure, it was Mrs. Pelican who was the man in that family. She filled up the house with boarders and the Pelican had to come home and help. 'Twas then he laid the wrong foundation. He went down from the tailor's shop to being the husband of a woman who ran a boarding-house. And — whisper, this I'd never breathe, 'tis I have seen him with a big apron tied about his neck, washing dishes. Once I remember talking with Mrs. Pelican, when she do be taking in the wash and there was a set of underclothes of the Pelican's on the line. And what was it made of, do you think? Tobacco bags! Boarders' tobacco bags; 'twas she saved them and washed them and sewed them together like patchwork.

"'Faith," says I, "Mrs. Pelican, you'll do me a favor if you make the Pelican wear them rough side in — 'twas many saints and martyrs better than he who wore hair shirts."

'Well, there you are, she so saving as to make his underclothes from the little tobacco bags and him coming to end his days in the Poor Farm. Why? Why? Well, because his

wife died. That's why in his case and no other reason.

'Then Mrs. Kearns. Sure, there's a fine woman. I've known her these fifty years, a pious soul. If mass was at eight, sure there was Mrs. Kearns at the church at seven. She tells me she's worn the same bonnet for twenty-two years. Have you seen it? I have, and I think she counted wrong on the years. Old people are forgetful, you know. She has a shawl she's wearing these fifty years and never but once has she worn it right side out, always saving the right side for best and there never being any best, and now 'tis worn through in the folds, and never worn right side out but the oncet and that at her sister's funeral. Sure, if piety and saving kept folks out of the Poor Farm, Mrs. Kearns would be living in a palace. But here she is. And why? Because, poor as she was, she always felt she had neighbors poorer than she was and, little by little, all she had, went. Yes, all but the bonnet and the shawl.'

'And Timothy Murphy,' I ventured, 'why is he here?'

'Faith, put it to being a friend to brewers, if

you will. But in his day Tim Murphy was the best stonemason hereabout. Sure, he built the great wall about the Brown place. Did you ever see it?' I nodded. 'And he built the retaining wall at the county jail, too — but' — and he laughed — 'that was done at odd times.'

'Short spells,' I suggested.

'Yes — but also short spells between them. But dollar for dollar, the county owes Tim Murphy a neat little bunch of money for honest labor performed.'

So there you have Tim Murphy's version of the causes of poverty. And 'anyways,' as Timothy would say, you who find sermons in stones, can you not read a screed in the shawl of Mrs. Kearns?

'Twas the following fall when next I saw Timothy. October, and the old man, with Scottie, the farm dog, was baiting the cows in the mowing. Tim sat on the stone wall by the bar way and the dog, at his command, kept back the line that straggled. With all Tim's crabbedness, Scottie was devoted to Murphy. Always after a chase he sought the old man's

side, holding up a paw for recognition. 'Sure, Scottie, me arm is tired shaking hands with you,' he was saying as I came up. He greeted me cordially for him, and croaked out a 'How are ye.' Timothy's voice resembled nothing so much as a rasp drawn over tough hickory wood.

'I've been away since I saw you,' he began. 'To New York. I could have stayed on with Maggie and the cop, but, saints preserve us! what a place for civilized people to live in! Sure, they all lack common intelligence in the "me-trol-i-pus." Why? They haven't the learning to name their streets; sure, they're all numbers. Maggie was on 168th Street, number two hundred and something, and her tenement was four hundred odd. 'Twas the devil to think of. I had it on a paper sewed into me coat, like a little child that strays from home. They wanted me to stay, but — Brownsville Town Farm is good enough for Tim Murphy.

'Maggie has a good husband — for a cop. He gave me a good time, took me round to the sights, 'til I thought my feet would drop off.' Then, suddenly, 'Was you ever on Coney Island?'

'Yes.'

'Well, I don't know who Coney was, but I think he is at the head of the forty thieves. Sure, it's ten cents for this and a quarter for that and they turn your pockets. And Maggie's cop was some spender — for a sober man,' he qualified reluctantly. 'We saw the whole island and I didn't put foot into a boot for three days after, I was that spent. Sure, I was just going to ask you did you ever go to Hell? I mean the one at Coney Island. 'Tis a river and boats on it and the cop insisted on our going and I went. The boat shoots into the bowels of the island, I guess; there are fires here and there and in the middle a burning mountain. Faith, it made a man of my age thoughtful. We rounded a little corner and out jumps a little devil with a pitchfork and gives me a start, and the cop says: "What do you think of this, father?" and I back at him with, "I think it's a darn good place for a New York cop."'

'But you wouldn't stay in New York?'

'Not for worlds. I'm too old a dog to learn new tricks — I'm better here.'

'How's the Pelican,' I asked.

'Don't ask me,' he rasped back. 'Him and I say little these past two weeks. 'Tis because of my tobacco. I missed the plug and I noticed the Pelican smoked more than usual.'

'But,' I said, harking back to a former conversation, 'the Pelican always tells the truth.'

'Sure, he may, but I'll never give him the satisfaction of asking him. Our friendship is over.'

'Gone up in smoke,' I suggested.

'Sure, ask him as to that. He's the only one of the two who knows the taste of smoke — not I.' He pointed toward the house.

I beheld the Pelican, the ninth part of a man, coming toward us, assisted by two canes. His walk was laborious.

'Faith, the two canes he has are the only thing about him I'd give five cents for,' Murphy commented.

I greeted the newcomer. Tim was busy with the dog and cows, a studied attention to the work in hand. At the end of half an hour 'Jimmy the child' coming to spell Tim with the cows, we three turned toward the house. Murphy had the canes under one arm, the

Pelican was between us, the subject of tobacco was not mentioned. Scottie gamboled in advance, much to the disgust of 'Jimmy the child.' 'No,' said Timothy, 'the dog comes with me. 'Twill do your young legs good to chase after the cows. Scottie and I have done our chore.' No one ever tried to call the dog away from Timothy. Long ago they found such an endeavor useless.

Mud time in Brownsville. That means by the calendar some two weeks in April. The frost went out quickly that year and left the back roads rivers of mud, a red or black sticky mass. Driving was well-nigh impossible. Livery keepers insisted on a pair of horses if one went far into the country. And yet this was the season when spring fever seized my friend Timothy and he insisted on my presence.

Palmer, the warden, telephoned late one night:

'You've got to come. We can't do a thing with Tim and he insists on seeing you. Help us out. I'll get you to the farm some way, only come.'

I went. Palmer met me with one of the big farm horses, in a small Concord buggy, much bespattered with mud. It was four miles, only one of which was good hard road. It took us two hours to make the trip and in places we went to the hubs. I resolved to read Mr. Timothy Murphy, the past terror of cops, a lecture on unselfishness. But, when I encountered him face to face, my resolution vanished. The old man was beginning to show his age, which must, by now, be nearing seventy-five. He had taken to a cane (only one stick — the Pelican has two!). He was the husk of a once husky man.

'Spring has come,' he began. But before he could continue, I launched an indignant protest.

'Of course it's come. Do you know what the roads are like? Rivers of mud up to the hubs and you insisting on my coming.'

'Well,' he answered, 'sure, I know rivers. I traveled one once at Coney Island, and perhaps 'tis that place is on your mind. However, a little penance'll not hurt ye. Ye need it, as well as the rest of us. But, I'll begin again, spring has come, as the roads bear witness, and Tim

Murphy wants to get down to the village and renew ould acquaintances. Mr. Palmer is willing, the overseers are willing, and now I'm asking you —'

'You have my permission; why don't you go?'

'Sure, that's the meat in the cocoanut, why? Well, because I don't know will Johnnie my boy have me.'

'Why don't you ask him?'

'What? Me use one of those telephones! I don't know how.'

'Well, get Palmer to telephone.'

'Sure, he won't, flat! And, besides, if you will telephone, 'twill carry more weight, don't you see? Johnnie would be at home now, if you'll ask him. Sure, as I told Mr. Palmer, I knew you was friend enough to help me out on this.'

He stood beside me at the telephone, awaiting the answering voice. It came, a sharp, crisp, female voice, 'Who is it?' The old man's hand on my shoulder trembled. He had heard the voice, and said simply, 'Herself! God help us! 'tis no use.' But I was bound to carry it out.

'A friend of Mr. Timothy Murphy,' I said.

'I have a message for Mr. Murphy's son John.'

'Well, I'll take it.'

'Mr. Murphy would like to know if it would be convenient for him to make a little visit to his son John's.'

'Mr. and Mrs. Murphy regret that they cannot entertain Mr. John Murphy's father "old Tim Murphy," not even for a part of a day.' And she hung up.

The old man was crestfallen. He muttered broken sentences, and then finally he exploded:

'Ah, ha! 'tis as I said to Johnnie oncet. Never marry a woman with a cast in her eye — she looks too many ways at oncet. Did he hearken to his father? He did not! He married Mary Ellen Rowan, Pat Rowan's girl. Sure, I knew the family in the old country. We were boys together in Clonakilty. The Rowans were always trash, there and here, and me boy Johnnie marries one of the trash. She's a society lady now, to let her tell it. Did you hear the answer you got? Sure she got that out of a book; no Rowan ever had head enough to make that up. Sure she was christened Mary Ellen and now what is she! "Marie Eleen," God help

us! They should have called her Bridget — an honest name — after her mother. What are the Rowans? What? As I told Rowan once, "Sure your name means, to us all, the wee, spindlin', second crop of grass. 'Tis second-rate." But Rowan says, "As long as the human race eats potatoes, the name of Murphy will be blessed; and that is right!" Mary Ellen! God help us! "Old Tim Murphy!" Sure that's me, and damned if I'm not proud of it. Well, that settles it. Only if you'd talked with Johnnie, I feel 'twould be different. She has a cast to her eye and she walks like a duck — and Johnnie is married to her! Poor Johnnie, say I.'

It was finally decided that I call up Johnnie that night from the hotel. I had the long ride back in the wind with a fresh horse and I called Johnnie and got him. A pleasant voice (unlike the paternal rasp) answered:

'Yes, I'll take him, but he must promise not to drink.'

This I conveyed to Palmer over the Town Farm line and waited. The husky voice of Timothy bellowed into the telephone:

'Promise? I'll be damned if I will! Sure, why

do I go to see my friends but to be sociable and have an occasional glass? Bad luck to me son's wife. 'Tis all her doing.'

I can't remember that I ever saw Timothy Murphy again. This I know — that, as he lay ill, the old, fighting spirit slowly retreating before the one conqueror, he turned to Mrs. Palmer with —

'Well, tell him I was speaking of him to you. I remember my friends.'

Some things count for more than an increase in the pay envelope.

IX

THE CAPTAIN OF HIS SOUL

IF all Socialists are like Darius Torrey, you may hand me a pen and I will sign on the dotted line. I will espouse the cause, willingly.

I first met Darius in response to a letter in which, among other declarations and protestations, he asserted that he 'was about to be sent to a living hell in which he would be left to rot.' My idea of the place he mentioned not conforming to this description, but rather as an abode of perpetual heat, I was interested to see the author of the letter and the habitation selected for him.

So following explicitly the directions in the letter, I journeyed to the little community where Darius lived. I was to inquire for one Day, who was the husband of Darius's sister and also held town office. I found a street of old, unkept houses, and in the oldest and perhaps the most unkept I found the domicile of the Day family. It was Monday. A straggling wash adorned a line at the side of the

house. A large woman, Amazonian in type, was hanging out clothes; in the doorway, sitting on the front steps, a little gray man with long beard and tousled hair.

'Mr. Day?' I asked.

'I'm him,' he replied, unmindful of his English, and rose. But before he could speak further, the Amazonian laundress strode toward us. Disdainfully she swept the little man aside and he resumed his seat on the steps with never a word.

'You're the man to see Dry, ain't you?' she asked.

I nodded.

In a shrill voice she called, 'Dry! Dry! The man has came.'

From somewhere in the great old house I heard the tap, tap, tap of a cane and the uneven walk of one crippled. 'Dry' appeared, an individual as large as his sister, tall, heavy, and walking with effort. As Mrs. Day had dismissed her husband, so in a quite lordly way Mrs. Day's brother dismissed her.

'We shall go into the best room,' he said with finality.

She protested or rather began a protest with, 'But it ain't fixed up, Dry, and —'

'That'll do — the best room will serve our purpose, and remember — I want to be left alone.'

Mrs. Day withdrew and resumed her task of hanging out the clothes. Her husband sat quietly in the same hunched-up posture. Darius threw open the best-room door; I entered; he closed the door and I stood in total darkness. He moved with effort to the side windows and raised the shades. I was aware from his mode of locomotion that one of his legs, at least, was artificial; also that its joints, from need of lubrication, squeaked pathetically.

With the two shades raised, I surveyed the room: a typical New England parlor, bright ingrain carpet, 'haircloth set,' what-not, center table, family crayons; a stopped clock and several vases on the mantel. I found a seat in one of the slippery armchairs, but Darius remained standing and began in a quiet but deeply resonant voice:

'I sent for you because what they propose to do with me is intolerable. I protest! I have the

misfortune to be a charge upon this insignificant town and I am to be sent to a place — a living hell!' He paused, choking with anger and emotion; his body swayed back and forth, the artificial leg squeaked dolefully. The pause was for dramatic effect, I felt sure; after it he proceeded: 'Because of my views, because I'm progressive, because I believe in the better brotherhood of man and an era of hope and joy for all. Yes! because I'm a Socialist I'm an outcast! I'm despised! I have been told by that little spider you saw at the door, Day — a town officer, too — that proves the absolute degeneracy of this place, I ask you, don't it? — I've been told by him that I'm no credit to no one, and the town ain't making a pauper's bed out of rose-leaves, or words to that effect. If I didn't believe as I did I'd wring his neck! And also he keeps out of my way! Besides, I've lost a leg, an accident, but it makes things harder, don't it?'

'What do you do — that is, what's your trade?' I asked.

'Shoe worker, turned goods, theatrical and fancy stuff. Good pay; yes, but they won't

hire me, 'cause of my "social activities." Just spite, I call it.'

'Are you sure that's the only reason?'

'Yes, in a way, but I'm outspoken, you see — I don't hide my light under a bushel. I come out with what I believe. And when I read a good thing in my "Appeal," or in the "Call," or in a speech by John Spargo, I just quote it, and the capitalists, who own all the shops, turn me out, and now I'm on the town and going to be sent to this living hell.'

'As aforesaid,' I interposed.

His manner changed at once and he laughed a very hearty laugh. 'Say,' he said, '"as aforesaid" is good, and the way you said it lets me know I can depend on you. Ain't I right?'

'Yes, and no,' I answered. 'If you'll help, too, shoulder to shoulder, brotherhood of man, yes! If you won't and hold back, no!'

So we sat and planned a list of the places in which he could work in the neighborhood of K., and a promise that if a job was found, John Spargo should not go into the factory. On my way out I talked with Day, Day the despised.

'He's smart — best turned-shoe worker in K.

or anywheres — but this durn Socialist business, he's crazy over it, and he talks too much. Can't stay *here*, not but what *I'm* willin', but my wife objects; he'll eat us out of house and home, and he's domineerin' and set. He can't stay — But if you'll get him a job — it'll last some time anyway.'

Dry got a job and I heard no more for almost a year; then one morning a soiled and crumpled envelope with the address in pencil was laid on my desk — a long rambling letter. Darius was living at Socialist Hall in K.; 'the brothers' were helping; capitalism was rampant; the working-man was fast becoming submerged; he had a proposition to put up to me; he counted on me and quoted 'living hell aforesaid.'

Socialist Hall in K. is up three flights of stairs. As I climbed them I wondered how Dry and his sixty years and his squeaky leg ever got to the top. I talked with the resident Socialist, if such could be selected as his title, for he was, on my arrival, in residence, and he was also a Socialist.

'You see, it's this way. We like Darius; he's

our best talker and knows all about capital and labor and socialism; he lost his job and we took him in here. He sleeps on two settees and we give him a quarter for breakfast, the same for supper, and more for dinner; but it's a drain on us, and if you could — just could help him out in this scheme we'd appreciate it. Ain't shirking our obligation, but we all believe in work. How did he lose his job? Oh! same old story, loyalty to the cause. He kind of lost his head one day in the shop and tossed his bench stool down the aisle and shouted: "Slaves! rise in your might, the collar of capital is about your necks! The heel of the tyrant is on your jugular veins! Rise!" And he got through. That's the trouble with Dry — gets the best pay in the shop and then just cuts loose. Believe me though, mister — he's some talker, a orator! When he gets started, he's a power to the cause.'

I heard the tap, tap, tap of the cane and the shuffle of the artificial leg coming up the stairs and so Darius appeared.

'Knew you'd come; knew you was the kind that would stick, told 'em all so — kind of a

half-Socialist, anyway; go as far as the brotherhood-of-man stuff, anyway, and that's good enough for me.'

I noticed that Darius was carrying round a little more avoirdupois and looked older. Over his plan he bubbled enthusiasm.

'An agency — sole agent for K. for kettles, most wonderful kettles ever made — guaranteed forever — and didn't I know the company — Baltimore concern, world-wide — AA 1 in Bradstreet's. "I shall insist on the best credit" I wrote before I clinched it. And — now I've got to get a stand and sell Saturday nights. I've got the stand picked out over in Lincoln Square; but the damn police are holding me up as a bad actor. Now I leave it to you — do I *look* like a crook? — with this game leg and all, do I?'

I assured him that he looked like a prosperous merchant, about to enter the employ of a huge concern with a million-dollar rating in Bradstreet's — but I added, 'What is a few dollars between friends?'

He eyed me as he had eyed me before and roared out, 'Say, you'll do! And now I'll tell you what I want. You see, one of the high city

officials — used to be one of us, is now as for that matter — he can get me this stand if a good man outside of the organization approaches him — a man from out of town, a man who can talk, a man who believes in the brotherhood of man, a man of your build.'

I am not a politician; I know little of city ways, being country domiciled, but Darius got the stand.

Another soiled, pencil-scrawled envelope greeted me one morning. Darius was a sojourner at the Town Farm in L.; conditions there were beyond description, one matter in particular was for my ear and my ear alone — would I come?

The L. Almshouse is a lonely little place, two miles from the main road and car line. The house is situated among bare hills at the end of a little narrow lane. The pastures are growing up to fern and savin and juniper. I always considered it a quiet, almost a lonely spot. The matron was a kindly, elderly woman; her son was the warden. She welcomed me.

'*I* get along with him all right, so does Harry;

the folks in the other side kind of leave him alone. And my! I've cooked for hearty men at haying-time, but he will eat more than three such. To-day for dinner, besides all else, a whole squash pie, *one whole pie!*'

When I came into his room he was gazing intently out of the window. He turned slowly (he was ever one for dramatic effect) and, with one finger on his lips imposing silence, motioned for me to come beside him.

'See,' he whispered — pointing to an object in the field a hundred feet away — 'see. Do you know what that is?'

'A woodchuck,' I replied.

'You guessed right. I was in hopes you would *see* it and not have to take *my word* for it — destroying the land! Devastating crops, robbing the poor of their sustenance! And Harry here! Harry, I repeat, refusing, yes, refusing to shoot it. Isn't it awful?'

'Well,' I said, 'why did you send for me?'

'Why? That! That!' And he pointed a finger at the woodchuck. 'You saw it, didn't you? Do you call that a proper animal to entertain on a poor farm? It is like the lily of

the field, "it toils not, neither does it spin"; it eats and eats, and he who is responsible refuses to shoot it. What are *you* going to do about it, now that you have seen it and the devastation?'

'Darius,' I said, 'let us consult together. The last time I had the pleasure of a visit you were entertaining a mercantile career. It was successfully launched, I take it?'

'Yes,' he admitted slowly.

'And now I find you here — "out of the frying-pan into the fire."'

'No — out of the kettle business into the Town Farm.'

'Well?' I queried.

'Not well — damnable — the police, the hirelings of capital — they hung about my stand every Saturday night. I could see in their faces that they were there to taunt me and goad me on. I made money — I could sell the stuff — but one night I gave them all a run for their money. I bawled out the police and hirelings and went through with the usual challenge to the proletariat, "Rise! and smite the hirelings of capital!" And four of them ran me in. The kettle business failed up then and there.'

'You aren't giving up, Darius, are you?'

He got up and, steadying himself with his cane, laughed disdainfully.

'Give up? Me? Never! I may be in the poorhouse, but I'm going to get out. I've patented a new type of cultivator. It's a go, too, and nobody robs me of this as the feller did of the harness patent.' (He really had an inventive turn — the Yankee in him.)

'Good!' I exclaimed and quoted the verse of Henley ending,

> 'Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody but unbowed.'

'Say it all,' he demanded, and I did. Then, 'Send it to me, all of it. I can use it in a speech. I'll learn it here.' Then a pause.

'John Spargo speaks in V. a week from Sunday. I'm specially invited and asked to sit on the platform — a great honor. The brothers in K. will pay my car fare from the end of the road here to V., but how can I get the two miles to the car line? Yes, here I rot — rot and —'

'The living hell aforesaid,' I ventured.

He broke into a smile and then laughed. He was standing, and his leg squeaked.

'Why don't you oil it?' I asked.

'It sometimes speaks for me, you see.'

'A dignified silence is eloquent,' I said.

'Wait! I want to get that down. I can use that in a speech too.'

'I think,' I suggested, 'that Harry will take you down to the car line and come after you, so you can sit on the platform.'

He brightened. 'If he only would, I'll do most anything.'

'Forget the woodchuck,' I put in, 'the devastator of the fields, the robber of the sustenance of the poor — even that?'

'Yes, even that.'

At the door I turned and said, 'Anything more, Dry, a half-Socialist can do for a whole one?'

'I hate to ask you, but my subscription to the "Appeal" has run out, and it is my best friend.'

'It will come. And so, O noble potentate! I say "selah,"' and spread my hands in gesture. Quick as a flash he assumed the same attitude and gesture, saying,

'"Garden of Allah!" Don't be surprised, O

King. I read it on an advertisement in the "kafe" where I used to eat.'

If all the brotherhood present at the John Spargo meeting were as happy as Darius, John Spargo must have felt he had not visited Massachusetts in vain. I heard that Henley's poem was recited.

The next I heard of Darius came in the shape of a personal visit to me at the office. Prosperity had perched upon his banner. He owned a news-stand and several paper routes. His visit was friendly and also one of business. He broached a colossal scheme to assist poor and struggling boys. They were to be employed on the various paper routes at J. Darius was to find and equip a dormitory and home, put a fine woman in charge and assume care of the boys.

'Would the State (did I think) be a party to furnish the boys?'

But as collective housing of children was against State policy — not but what the plan was splendid and a model of unique philanthropy — why not endeavor to get some church — here a snort from my visitor — or social

agency, with a strong accent on *social*, etc., etc.

But the paper business came to wreck. Some one secured all Darius's assets and absconded. and then came the disjointed letter to one high in authority, a letter that set forth all the wrong done the news-stand owner, the refusal of the local authorities to aid, the oft-repeated quotations, such as 'John Spargo says,' etc.; and, 'Karl Marx declares,' etc.; and then a kind tribute to me, 'my friend who has stuck, *he* knows me,' etc. The threat of self-destruction, and all in all a rambling, hastily written, discouraging letter, which resulted in a summons to me from one in authority.

I cherish a recollection of the last time I saw that letter — in the office of a police official, a man was seated before a desk with Darius's letter in front of him, his elbows on the table, his cheeks in his hands, a combination of Sherlock Holmes and Hawkshaw.

Then he spoke, cutting out his words as one speaks who has great authority: 'I have gone carefully over this letter, word by word. I shall secure the custody of those who are guilty. *I know* — I shall order my men to arrest John

Spargo and Karl Marx. These men are responsible — they are the only names except your own mentioned in your friend's letter.'

Is it to be wondered at, now, really, that Darius Torrey was a Socialist?

I understand that eventually justice or partial justice was done, that some of the proceeds of the little news-stand got back to their rightful owner. And yet I know I shall eventually hear from Darius again. I think he is still making a good fight against odds in a world that cares very little for the brotherhood of man. If ever any one was the Captain of his Soul, it is my friend Darius Torrey.

X

'COMPANY' IN HEAVEN

DO you call it lack of faith, if you just don't want to take certain Bible statements as literal?' That was the question which Martha, these late years, had been asking herself. Martha was a simple, godly soul and a devout Bible student. She could answer many posers in connection with the Book; it is true her pronunciation might be questioned by high ecclesiastical authority — particularly as to the Old Testament names; but she knew — and what is a misplaced accent between Bible scholars?

Revelation was the stumbling block — that last book of the Bible which gives such minute descriptions of the hereafter. In her early life (and probably she might have had a little touch of the romantic in her nature) she fairly reveled in Revelation, could repeat verse after verse. But now, somehow, when in a very short while it was all to be realized and the prophecies soon to be fulfilled, it overpowered her. You see,

she was just a simple, kindly old woman now, one who was country born and country bred. Once and once only — as she confessed — had grandeur, pomp, and ceremony burst on her gaze. This was years ago when she had stood on the street corner in a neighboring town (the big town) and witnessed the parade of a one-ring circus. The red-coated band, the milk-white horses, the golden chariots, the lone and stately elephant decked out in royal purple, the caparisoned riders — oh! it was magnificent! She held her hands over her eyes, dazzled; and somehow in the later years, when she read the description in Revelation, the gorgeous parade was the panorama photographed in her mind, and it all didn't ring true with the austere interior of the old white church, with white-washed walls, back-breaking pews, and thread-bare carpet. And so Martha was really afraid to die — because, because death might bring disappointment.

'I want you here,' she said to the matron. 'I want to hold your hand when this world is over. No! not that I'm afraid, nor have anything on my mind for which I am sorry, but — oh! it

must be as I want it. You see, I just want to reach out and open a strange door and pass in, and I want it to be just kind of homelike and simple, as I have always lived, and I want to find all those that I know and be happy.

'If — if it should be the other way — I mean the pearly gates and streets of gold and the great throne — I couldn't stand it. I'd be lonely, I'd be just "company" in heaven and not one of the folks. It's that which bothers. Not that I've lost faith. But I know, somehow, God will fix it, in spite of Revelation. Not but what John was right and it's all right for some folks — rich folks — prosperous people. But God is going to fix it right for us poor folks that never had gold and diadems and pearls and all such. And as it's forever and ever, it can't be "company" that long.'

And so she passed on, holding the matron's hand, and the matron, good practical woman, said, 'I heard the click of the latch when she opened the door and that proves it *was* an old-fashioned heaven she went into. Otherwise she'd have rung an electric bell.'

So I guess 'God fixed it.'

XI

THE 'PILLER AND THE CLAOUD'

JASON HOWLAND was eighty, but for all his weight of years his stride was still elastic, his manner sprightly. He was a tall, spare man, erect, keen, impressive, and possessing a most alert mind. He had never suffered from many of the ailments which dwell with old age. He possessed a most decisive manner; in fact, it might be called controversial, for he was opinionated and his intimates even went so far as to say that he was 'set,' and at times 'cantankerous.'

The old man made his home with his only relative, a granddaughter, Dora Billington, and as he was a Civil War veteran his pension gave him the independence his nature demanded. It is true his war record was slim. It consisted of three months at a Virginia camp and a month's guard duty at a supply depot, after which he was invalided home. In the seventies this record served to keep the veteran pretty well in

the background, but, as the years advanced and age and disease depleted the ranks of the Grand Army, all survivors were laurel-crowned and Jason came into his own, so that at eighty he considered himself one of the heroes. There were but three veterans left in town, and of these Jason was the only native son, and the last of the town's quota.

Like most old people there was an everlasting sameness to his daily life. Summer and winter he rose early, breakfasted with the family, then, reaching for his cane, he walked to Mason's store at the Four Corners. Here he spent his forenoon, always occupying the same chair. In summer he sat upon the store piazza; in winter his chair was usually placed beside the big, wood-burning stove that heated the place. Upon arriving, he invariably stood before the counter and selected a five-cent cigar — the blunt Londres shape affected by all the older New England smokers. (Let me here insert, for the benefit of the present generation, this fact, that the Yankee smoker whose manhood era was cast in mid-Victorian times, invariably chose the Londres type of cigar. While he

might chew the weed, he was seldom a pipe-smoker.) This was Jason's sole luxury. He was an expert smoker; for, once alight, the five-cent cigar always lasted two hours, and if the conversation was not too animated, it is said, he had been known to make his 'seegar' last from nine o'clock to noon. It was his custom to impale the stub upon a sharpened match and so smoke until the fire almost came in contact with his lips. You see this was his one and only daily smoke, and the longer it lasted, the more enjoyment he got from his investment. Nobody ever called Jason 'Mr. Howland,' leastways no one ever called him so a second time. Even Billy Billington, Dora's husband, called him 'Jason.' Only as it touched his war record did the old man permit his age to be considered. Jason he had been to his own generation, and Jason he proposed to be to all the succeeding ones. The salesmen who frequented the store at Mason's Corners always talked with the old man, and some of them were known to 'get him started.' On such occasions the characteristic stubbornness of his nature came to the fore and the five-cent cigar usually went out.

On Mondays Mason's boy, who drove the grocery team, visited that part of the town where was located the Town Farm. On this particular Monday in April, Ed Mason had come back from the route and reported the sudden and serious illness of old Silas Fuller.

On this April morning Jason had been enjoying himself. There had come a tea-and-coffee salesman who, tarrying after his trade was fulfilled, persuaded Jason to tell of his encounter with 'A.' Lincoln. This incident had taken place during Jason's duty as guard at the supply depot. It had been one of the old man's stock stories, and he had told it regularly for the past twenty years. 'A.' Lincoln had come nearer and nearer to the soldier on guard at each successive telling, until, as Mason said once, 'If Jason lives to be ninety, he and "A." Lincoln will shake hands.' Jason always referred to the War President as 'A.' Lincoln, never using the word 'Abraham.' He told it with a little bravado, because it was his only war story, and also because he had really seen Lincoln, a fact of which he was most proud. He enjoyed the telling. During the recital the

'seegar' always went out, and when it was relighted he marched down the street for home, head erect, shoulders squared, step firm. He might have been in step to martial music.

But to-day, with the finale of the story came Mason's boy with the news of old Silas Fuller's sudden illness, and it had come home to Jason that Silas was his friend; that Silas had been at the Town Farm for two years; that Jason had always been intending to go over and see him, yet never had. Now Silas, he learned, was 'took bad,' and probably 'a stroke.' He did not stop to relight the 'seegar,' but, reaching for his cane, rose from his chair and started home.

'Silas Fuller's had a stroke,' he announced to his granddaughter; 'took bad, just after breakfast; Mason's boy said they sent for the doctor, but had slim hope. To think I ain't been a-near him at the Poor Farm! To-morrow morning I am going to walk over and see him.'

'Walk over!' Dora exclaimed. 'Walk over! Three miles out and three back. Why, Grandpa, you can't.'

'Can't,' the old man snorted. 'Who says I

can't? Why can't I? What's six miles for a man like me! What?'

'You haven't walked that far in years.'

'Sposin' I ain't? Don't prove I can't. When I was in the army, six miles was nothing, and 'tain't now to a man as is healthy; and anyway, I'm goin'.'

All night the old man lay and tossed reproaching himself with the neglect of silence. So he was up betimes and he found Dora up and stirring, and what seemed strange, he encountered no opposition from Dora or her husband. She knew it was useless to argue with her headstrong grandparent.

So by nine o'clock we see Jason setting out. Dora had turned up his overcoat collar and, amid much protest, tied about his neck a knitted scarf — it had been her Christmas gift to the old man — 'Claoud,' he called it, and in pronouncing it he used every vowel in the language save *i*. 'Claoud' it always had been to the family. Somehow, in the back of the old man's head, he remembered the word as used for a scarf of the forties and fifties. Then, pretty girls wrapped fleecy, white 'clouds'

about their necks, or framed pink cheeks in one and long tassels floated out behind. 'Clouds' were contemporaries of 'sontags.'

Beyond the house the road ascended a little hill, then from the crest dipped sharply into a little hollow. Here the old man halted, it being out of sight of home, leaned his cane against a tree and unwound the cloud, folding it carefully. He then put it in his overcoat pocket. He turned down his coat collar and resumed his walk. The level stretches offered no unusual effort, but he was rather short of breath on the steeper grades. By the shores of the pond, he stopped again and, leaning on his cane, let his gaze wander out over the blue water, ruffled by the April wind. Time was, he remembered, when there was no habitation upon the shores. Then it was 'The Pond.' Here he and Silas had fished, swam, rowed, shot water fowl, and in winter skated. It seemed, as he thought of it, that always Silas was with him, and now (the hand on the cane trembled) Silas was 'took bad,' with the 'passing away' not far. Jason resented the settlements of summer cottages about the shores of the pond; he resented the change of

the name — 'Crystal Lake'; resented the merry throngs of young folks, who every summer came here and covered the surface of the water with gay-colored canoes or trooped into the lake in bathing-suits as gayly colored as their canoes. It all seemed to him out of place on his pond, Silas's pond. Still, he knew the summer folk brought many dollars to the townsfolk; their money enabled his grandchildren to pay for their house, for Billy and Dora owned a little farm. But the old man musing there beside the water would have preferred less and the life as it was. His pond, Silas's pond, unspoiled.

It was a tired old man who finally knocked at the Town Farm door, for the three miles had been weary miles and had taxed his strength. All along the way he had been preparing set little speeches appropriate to the occasion. 'Words of hope to a dying friend'; 'Consolation to one about to pass on'; such might have been apt titles to what was passing in the old man's mind. It was to be a most solemn occasion, a painful duty, and he was just enough of a New-Englander to find a certain sad pleasure in

anticipation of the rôle he should fill. All he hoped was that Silas was still with the world and conscious. Mrs. Arnold, the matron, opened the side door to his knock, for Jason knew it was useless to try the front door, approached as it was by no walk and never used, and probably seldom opened.

'Why, Jason Howland, how ever did you get here?' she asked.

'Walked.'

'Didn't no one offer a lift?'

'No one didn't; there warn't no one all the way down here — is Silas still — still — here?'

'Silas? Oh, yes, he's here. He had a bad spell yesterday, but the doctor said as how it was acute indigestion. He's feeling just as well as ever to-day.'

Jason stared, then he glared; just what he wanted for words failed to come. He sank into a proffered chair in the kitchen and began:

'And me a-laborin' to see a man smitten with death, me a-walkin' three long miles, against the wind too. The hills was steep; and Silas "as well as ever." Ain't that gratitude? Why couldn't he have stayed sick at least till I

visited? Why, Mason's boy said as how he warn't long to live and I hurried down here to set with him at the end, and now — now — he's "as well as ever."'

'Of course I'm sorry, Jason, but we're all glad Silas warn't called yet. He'll be glad you come. He always expected you and hoped you hadn't forgotten him, so take off your coat and I'll take you into the sittin'-room.' Mrs. Arnold was used to old people; she knew what to say, and what to leave unsaid. She knew if she gently chided the old man with his two years of neglect, it would switch his mind from himself to Silas. And she was right.

'Well, of course, now I'm here I'll go in and see him. Been meaning to come for ever so long, but it's a long hard walk' (which wasn't the way he described it to Dora). 'But I tell you, Mrs. Arnold, I expected to find a man on the grave's edge and almost ready to go. Why, I've been a-turnin' over in my mind, all the way down here, just what I'd ought to say and me knowin' him since we was boys together — I don't like it in Mason's boy to make out it was so bad, and he not really knowin'. It's a long

walk for any man, and, although I'm as spry as most, I found it long. And, besides, the wind's keen and searchin' like — spring's late this year. And then, then — to find Silas "as well as ever." I can't somehow believe it.' And much more indignant disappointment.

Fate and circumstances had woven a drab life-fabric for Silas Fuller; there were many knotted threads. Still, if one looked closer, one discovered fine tendrils of gold, and then, when the sunlight beat upon it one saw that these gold threads, fine though they were, had overspread it all, and one beheld not the drab cloth of the first glance, but delicate opalescent tints, like the sky at sunset, above a summer sea. Had you presumed to tell Silas that his life had been a drab one, spent uneventfully in the quiet little village, he would smilingly have told you that he had received much from it. He had been a wheelwright and at his trade a master-workman, for wagons of his construction still rolled down the road, after a half-century of hard usage.

If, as the Scripture says, 'The meek shall

inherit the earth,' then Silas was sure of his heritage. He would take his place with a very small company of New England people who would inherit. Where Jason was controversial, Silas was conciliatory. Where Jason was outspoken and opinionated, Silas was silent, for he never spoke to offend. Where Jason was stubborn and inclined to selfishness, Silas was amenable and considerate of others. Still, such is the way of the world that the Jasons live on in independence, or what is so considered, and the Silases come to the Town Farm.

Fuller had never been a business man; it is true he had been a skilled craftsman and his handiwork lasted to proclaim him such. But he was ever lenient toward a debtor, was ever generous with his small means. Honest as the sun, he so judged all, nor complained when he was cheated. In his old-fashioned philosophy he put it: 'If a man owes me and can pay, yet doesn't, why, then he must worry as I would worry if the circumstances were reversed.'

But the automobile had driven the horse-drawn vehicle from the road, and the wheelwright business ceased because of the lack of

trade. At seventy-five Silas, somehow, hoped that he would get to the end of the road unaided. His income was small, his resources slender, and if, as he jokingly said, he continued to live on borrowed time, the town must plan for his remaining years. At eighty, the town so planned, and the old man found his road ended at the side door of the almshouse. That day, when he had come, he remembered how wistfully his eyes had looked beyond the almshouse yard and the Town Farm field, a short stretch beyond, to the old south burying-ground. To have gone on would have been his wish (it is the wish of so many old people who outlive all of the sweetness of life), but he was destined to tarry.

It was a happy meeting as the two old friends shook hands, Jason forgetting, for the moment, the long walk and his disappointment in finding his friend well and not on the brink of the grave. Silas was seated in a large armchair, by the south window. He had laid aside his book — for he was ever a great reader — and had laid his glasses in the book at his place. To add to

the old man's comfort a pillow was at the back of his head — Jason noticed this and commented:

'Well, you've got a piller to support you, anyway'; and then 'Heard you was took bad yesterday, and so I come.'

'I've been expecting you ever so long, Jason — seems good to see you again.'

But Jason had to have his say.

''Spected to find you gettin' ready to pass on — knew just what I was goin' to say to comfort you — but now, after walking three miles, I find you just as well as ever, comfortable, settin' up and with a piller at the back of your head — It's hard to get my thoughts collected.'

Silas smiled, for he had known Jason for nearly eighty years.

'Well, I'm sorry I recovered so quickly, but go right ahead, Jason, for I guess I need comforting.'

'Maybe you do — anyway, I'm surprised after hearin' from Mason's boy as to how you'd had a "stroke" and was given up and me a-startin' out early and walkin' the three miles

and never a team passin', and the wind's cold, too, for April. I faced it all the way — southwest and keen as a razor. And then to find you settin' up with a piller at your head and 'parently well, and all it was, as Mrs. Arnold says, was 'cute digestion — that ain't nothin' — I'm disappointed in you, Silas. Why didn't you stay sick till after I come? Was goin' to say a lot about passin' on; we're both gettin' on, you know, and I know *you* feel your age, and, anyway, hereafter's hereafter, and what it is, who knows? Even you, with all your reading' (he glanced at Silas's book, with the glasses for a bookmark), 'don't know, Silas Fuller. I was a-goin' to speak of that, but, well, live folks ain't interested in funeral sermons.'

Having delivered himself of this, the two old men sat in silence several minutes. Silas knew his visitor, knew that he must voice all his disappointment, and then a conversation agreeable to Jason must be launched. So while the visitor talked, Silas bethought him of the subject nearest to Jason's heart — Decoration Day. When Jason finally subsided, because his complaint had been fully set forth, Silas spoke:

'I suppose you have all the plans made for Decoration Day?'

Thus prefaced, Jason sat up erect and launched forth on his favorite topic. 'Yes, mostly, all but the band. I didn't like the band we had last year. I-talians, and couldn't play what I wanted. I asked the head feller to play "Clayton's Grand March" when we left the church. Never heard of it! Think of that! So I give him the "Lightning Quickstep" for a second choice, and he'd never heard of that either. Drum and fife corps couldn't play the "Road to Boston," so I give up, and they played an I-talian piece by a man named Sousa, so they said. Had enough of that band; goin' to get a regular American band this year. Expect to have an A number 1 orator this year. Last year's man never referred to us old veterans, just talked on and on about Europe and Roosha and the like; everybody was disappointed. Goin' to have a regular orator this year, one of the kind who rises upon his toes and points down at us three veterans and thunders out, 'Venerable men! It was you who saved the Union!' Everybody claps and looks at us —

that's the kind of a orator! It shows proper patriotism to the comin' generations. I like orators who tell about our hardships and privations and earn the ten dollars the town appropriates. So this year we are goin' to have that kind.' He stopped, looked at Silas, reached for his hand, saying, almost tenderly:

'Wish you could get up to the exercises, Silas. They'll fix it for you.'

'I'm not a part of it all, Jason, and I guess I'm better here. I never cared for crowds, but I shall think of you all day, and I hope the band and orator will do their best.'

So they sat, Jason talking, Silas listening. Dinner-time came and Jason had a place laid for him at the table beside Silas. He was hungry from the long walk in the April wind and was about to begin, but Silas laid a restraining hand and rose. Just a simple little thanksgiving said with dignity: 'For Thy bounty and the bounty of our Town, we thank Thee, O Lord'; and Jason wondered why any man, ending his days at the Poor Farm, should be prayerful or should see ought for which to

offer thanks. Jason's kind would not have been so inspired.

Arnold was driving up to the store, and so he carried Jason home, leaving Silas in his big chair with the comfortable 'piller' at his head, Silas, whose old eyes looked out across the Town Farm fields and rested on the slope beyond, covered so thickly with gray slate and white marble stones.

In the hollow below the house Jason made Arnold stop. Then the old man, very deliberately, drew the 'claoud' from his pocket and tied it about his neck, as Dora had tied it in the morning.

'Silas's all right,' he proclaimed as he burst into the house. 'Just as well as ever, settin' up with his head leanin' 'gainst a piller — Glad I went, he had a lot to say. Didn't mind the walk, 'twa'n't nothin'; goin' over to Mason's now, ain't had my "seegar" to-day. Goin' to shed this claoud.'

XII

JUST JANE

PERHAPS the best title for this story would be 'Sign on the Dotted Line.' It will answer from one angle the question, 'How do people get poor?'

This is the story of plain Jane Howe; plain in feature, plain in manner, plain in her sense of duty. Jane's father was a farmer, he was in comfortable circumstances and had prospered, because his farm was so situated that all its produce was sold to the operatives in one of the large textile mills. Jane was brought up along old New England lines, raised on the Bible and John Calvin, and ever with an ingrained sense of honesty. Yes, I think Jane had the New England conscience at its best. She was naturally domestic in her tastes, but this did not deter her from securing a situation in the textile mill. At that time much of the help in the mills was drawn from the sons and daughters of native stock, although within a few years

immigration was to play its part. Jane, however, did not take kindly to the confinement; there was too much routine and monotony.

When she was twenty, the chance was offered her to manage one of the large corporation boarding-houses linked to the mills of her town, and she accepted. She found this work more congenial. Schooled in a New England kitchen by an efficient mother, she fitted into the new position acceptably to the management. Also her wages included her board and room and she found the opportunity to save her money. Each year she was called to the office of the superintendent, commended, and each year her weekly wage was increased two dollars.

At twenty-five she had over one thousand dollars in the local savings bank, for saving came as a natural habit to her. Her boarding-house harbored thirty, all English-speaking people, mostly English, but there were Scotch and Irish besides. The English were skilled textile workers and a valuable addition to native operatives. Among these English workers was one Robert Preston, a young fellow of

thirty, skilled as a loomfixer and endowed with the fatal gift of beauty. Between these two, plain Jane Howe, the efficient manager, and Robert Preston, the expert loomfixer, a wholesome intimacy sprang up. It developed into a bond of friendship, and eventually Jane became Mrs. Preston.

They were married in the Episcopal chapel, and to plain Jane, reared in the creed of John Calvin, the ceremony was impressive. It stirred within her matter-of-fact bosom a tiny spark of romance.

Preston at this time of life was practical, so it was decided that the couple should own a home. The cottage selected cost twelve hundred dollars, and into it went Jane's thousand dollars, supplemented by two hundred which Preston furnished. As was the English custom, the title of the home stood in the name of Robert Preston. Jane, in the after years, learned much of the customs inherited by English husbands. Had she known the word, she would have described herself as a 'chattel.' Always she found that the wages of her handsome husband were just sufficient to care for

the needs of the same handsome husband, and no more. So Jane retained her position as manager of the corporation boarding-house and arranged for the family meals there, the board of her husband being deducted from her weekly pay, a system that very well suited Preston.

Jane's married life never showed the progression of her years of spinsterhood. Work as hard as she could, somehow it took all of her earnings to live. She always paid the taxes on the cottage and furnished funds for repairs. But Preston always conveyed the money to the tax collector and paid with a flourish, Preston always ordered about the workmen who made repairs and also grumbled at the bill. But Jane's money paid for the work. Early in their married life Preston, aware that some managers of mill boarding-houses reaped certain commissions for the bestowal of trade, broached the subject to Jane. The New England conscience rose in its might and smote the Britain. Jane was honest.

Then came the time when Preston was discharged, not because he was incompetent, but

because he refused to work the full six days. It was about this time that Jane discovered that her handsome husband was a frequenter of the bar at the Eagle Hotel, a small hostelry that backed up to the river. But she said nothing as to this trait, merely suggested that Preston go to Lowell or Lawrence for work. Preston would go, wanted to go, wanted to work; but, how about expenses? Jane would supply car fare and a week's board. This met with a stubborn refusal. But if Jane would just sign a little paper, he could get sufficient funds for the journey. So Jane, the honest, the trustworthy, signed 'on the dotted line' against a little red seal, and Robert went journeying.

Mrs. Clancy lived next door. Mrs. Clancy, with all the combativeness of her race, had bent a stubborn husband into the path of sobriety and rectitude. She did it with a ball bat, seeking the occasion when Michael came home 'roaring.' After Michael got out of the hospital, he was a model husband. It is evident that in some cases a ball bat can effect a positive cure for certain pernicious instincts; as we read that operations performed upon the brains of

criminals sometimes effect a cure, Mrs. Clancy's method proved so efficient that she urged her neighbor, Mrs. Preston, to try it on 'her man.'

'And also, Mrs. Preston, I'm telling you, you're a good soul, but too "asy" by far with the man you have; hit him hard. Sure he's English, you know. 'Tis I who know that. Every night when he comes into the kitchen to talk with Mike, I sweeps up in me dustpan his cigar ashes and a pan full of the "h's" he's dropped.'

But Jane ignored this friendly advice. The job in Lowell was 'no good'; it lasted but three months and Robert was back.

Next we come to the episode of the life insurance. Jane had insisted, early in their married life, on an insurance for Robert. For years she had kept the premiums paid. She had saved in her methodical way all the receipts and, should Robert die, two thousand dollars would accrue to her.

One night Robert explained to her all the intricate mechanism of life insurance and how it needed simplification. The next night he appeared with a document for her to sign, which

would simplify his insurance. 'It will make it very simple from now on and you just "sign on the dotted line."' And Jane, trusting him, signed. When she had stood up, years ago, in the little Episcopal chapel and entered into the marriage bond with Robert Preston, she had promised to 'love, honor, cherish, and obey in sickness and in health.' So she signed. Everything, she knew, was all right, because the premiums came regularly and she paid them and saved the receipts.

When Jane was sixty-five, Robert, who had done very little work for the past twenty years, was taken seriously ill. Pneumonia developed, and, in spite of Jane's untiring care, Preston died. The last night, as she sat by the bedside, she had been willing to forgive much. She promised him that he should have a suitable funeral from his church and also that a proper stone would be erected over him. Poor people do not shrink from the discussion of death and all that it may entail. It was a most impressive service. Jane wept when the minister came to the part of the ritual that says, 'Dust to dust,

ashes to ashes'; she realized the nothingness of life and, shall it be confessed? she missed a most worthless husband.

Shortly after the burial, Jane received a communication from a man who claimed to hold a mortgage of several hundred dollars on the cottage. She didn't quite understand it, so called on the man. Then she discovered that the paper she had once signed so long ago was a mortgage and release of her dower right. It also developed that Preston, afraid to tell her, had somehow managed to keep the interest paid. It was a blow to her, now nearing seventy and dependent on her earnings to live. These earnings she got through washing and cleaning for those who needed such services. However, she felt that, with the insurance money now due, she could raise the mortgage and so own her own home. One thing she had always feared, and it is *the* common dread of country people who own a home, and that one thing was a mortgage.

But the insurance did not come, so with much labor, for she seldom put pen to paper, she wrote to the company and in due time received

a letter saying a check had been sent to the person to whom the insurance had been assigned many years ago, one Brussart, the owner of the Eagle Hotel and its bar-room. There was a quiet dignity to the old lady when she appeared that night in the bar-room of the Eagle Hotel. She paused but a moment at the door, stifled by the smoke-charged atmosphere. Then she strode up to the bar, behind which was its white-aproned proprietor. The loafers and hangers-on gaped open-mouthed at the sight of the dignified old lady standing before the bar. She spoke very clearly and to the point, charging Brussart with enticing the late departed Robert Preston, mortgaging his soul, helping him cheat her, and worst of all cheat himself. But she failed to impress Brussart. It is true, José, the Spaniard, who was bartender and man-of-all-work, listened attentively, as did the bar-room crowd, but that was all. So, dignified, and with head up, as she had entered, thus she departed. And in her mind came the doubt of an Omnipotent Being, for if there really was a God, a just God, why was this visited upon her? She turned over in her mind all that had come

into her life, nor could she uncover one incident or one action of which she felt ashamed. If Christianity, as she saw it, fastens upon God plain justice (for she worshiped the Old Testament God that demanded 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'), then why had these troubles come to her?

A bungstarter is not a weapon. It is a solid block of wood upon a slender handle and is used to remove bungs from barrels. Shortly after Jane's visit to the Eagle Hotel, Brussart was found one morning beside his open and rifled safe, dead. His head had been pounded to a pulp by the bungstarter, which lay beside him. José, the Spaniard and bartender, was gone, nor was he ever found. Jane was not bloodthirsty, nor did she exult, she merely remembered the text, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.

There is little more to add of a life spent in unceasing toil. It is recorded that Jane fell ill, that the house was sold, that she struggled on, but finally came to the town's almshouse, an inmate highly respected. She never moped,

she never complained, she was very cheerful, an optimist, faithful to the last, for she said:

'I promised Robert I would put up a suitable stone and with the last dollar I could call my own I did so.'

Like many another who has fought the good fight, and labored unselfishly, her last resting-place, beside Robert's stone, will be unmarked.

XIII

DEAD RECKONING

EVERY morning, weather permitting, Captain Billy Letterbridge 'cleared' the Almshouse steps and 'shaped his course' villageward. Captain Billy was blind, but undaunted. He was eighty-two, yet that mattered little. At first these voyages were taken with caution. 'My stick,' he said, 'is simply my rudder, reversed. I use dead reckoning. It is — or should be — eighty-five steps to the sidewalk, three hundred and eight to the railroad crossing. But my log was always wrong. What I need is a pilot.' And so two pilots were placed at his disposal — Eddie Cole and Tommy Small, both men grown, only still boys. So each morning, piloted by one of the boys, the Captain walked toward the town, but never into it. 'When we are at the red-brick house, Eddie, we'll cross over and come back on the westward course.' And so he always did.

At fifteen, a cabin boy on a whaler, he sailed

from Shoal Harbor and piled up on the beach at Quoddy Bay (wherever that may be). Three days with all boats and hawsers out and finally she was floated, no worse for the beaching. From fifteen to seventy-five he had followed the sea, going up, until at last he trod the quarter-deck of a clipper ship. Eighteen times he had rounded the Horn, and doubled the Cape of Good Hope almost as many. He had had the masts taken out of her in the China Sea and made port with jury rig. He had lost his rudder in a typhoon in the Indian Ocean, had constructed one of hawser and brought in ship and cargo. Between voyages he had run down to Shoal Harbor to pick up the threads of the old life. Always, during these sojourns, his hand had bestowed liberally to those in need, with never a thought of self and never a dollar laid by for the day when the old ship must tie up for good. At seventy-five, with eyesight failing and occupation gone, he cast anchor in the Sailors' Snug Harbor on Staten Island. Here, however, he was lonely and homesick. There is but one Shoal Harbor and one fortunate enough to be there born yearns to end one's

days there. It was a good institution — the Sailors' Snug Harbor — but to old Captain Billy it was always an institution, never a home. His mates were not congenial, many were foreign-born. 'I cast anchor,' he said, 'in the wrong harbor. So I weighed and now I'm moored for the remaining days here at Shoal Harbor Almshouse and it's home.'

He was a man of commanding presence, very courtly, as are men who have brushed elbows with many nationalities in foreign lands, soft-spoken, and yet they say he had quelled a serious mutiny by overawing his dusky crew. The loss of sight had been a heavy blow to the old man. He was now dependent on others for the news of the day and the happenings in the world.

Coleman was the Overseer of Shoal Harbor. One day he brought a new arrival into the men's room and introduced him to Captain Billy. This man had a disagreeable face. (Let us call it that and be charitable.) His eyes were shifty and very close together, his hair was black — now shot with gray — his face tanned

and his ears were adorned with small rings. Evidently he was a 'stranger,' as every one in Shoal Harbor who is 'outlander' is called; evidently he was not of American stock.

Coleman was abrupt: 'Captain Letterbridge, Captain Sange.'

Captain Billy rose and stretched forth his hand, groping. But the stranger made no effort to shake hands, and saying simply, 'Captain Letterbridge,' left the room. His accent was peculiar, the way he handled the *r*'s was odd, foreign, strange. Captain Billy resumed his seat. His old face flushed at the slight and then his mind began working. Where had he heard that voice? He had certainly heard his name so pronounced sometime, somewhere, in some remote corner of the world. So all the afternoon he opened door after door of memory. Hongkong? Rio? Bremen? Martinique? Liverpool? Algiers? Callao? Calcutta? Then — if he would only speak again, just sound his *r*'s again!

They sat far apart at the common table and Sange never spoke at meals. He shunned all the other men. Every day he would shuffle down to the beach at the back of the house and,

seated on the keel of an old wreck that had defied wind, weather, and tide for half a century, fold his arms and look out across the harbor, the harbor bar, and away to eastward, over the blue water.

Yet, for all his aloofness, Sange had one vulnerable spot. In the daylight and sunshine he brushed his fellows aside and strode off alone to his perch beside the sea. But when evening came and dusk shut down, he sought the common room and the other men. Always, at dark, he said briskly, and yet with a bit of a whine: 'Let's have lights. I cannot bide the dark.' And to please him, the light was turned on. It was so in his room, for he had permission to burn the light all night.

Once, when a furious thunder-shower broke at midnight over the town and put the electric station out of commission, there was consternation at the Almshouse, for the light in Captain Sange's room had gone out. Sange was in the long corridor raving, weeping, swearing. 'Bring a light! a light, I say! Bring it! I can't bide the dark, I tell you!' — and then a trail of oaths, echoing into sobs. Poor Eddie Cole,

coming to his relief, was seized and throttled and murder might have been done, but Captain Billy's door swung open, and a deep voice boomed, 'Let be, you! I know you, now. I know you.' Pandemonium! with Eddie crawling to Captain Billy's feet, the warden with a candle coming down the corridor, and Sange in collapse. They picked him up and laid him on his bed. Apparently he was unconscious, but when they withdrew, taking the candle, he burst out again with pleading and oaths, 'The light! I want it! Leave it here, I tell you!' And so they brought back the little candle and left him worshiping the spark of fire.

But Captain Billy had not fathomed the stranger's identity when he had said, 'I know you now.' He had not really meant he recognized Sange's personality. He meant that he had found him out for what his character really was, — tyrant and a brute, who wreaked vengeance on the weak and defenseless.

Never again, after the thunderstorm, was Sange known to speak to Captain Billy and seldom did he speak in his presence. Captain Billy turned it all over in his mind — 'Here am

I in perpetual night, never a gleam, never a ray pierces my nights and days, and yet I am unafraid. And here is he in terror as night approaches, a man whose conscience tears him when darkness comes. Wish I could only see his face, for I know that somewhere I have seen him, somewhere heard his voice before. I am confident he knows this and avoids me.'

When Sange died they buried him in the strangers' lot and they buried with him his secret.

Uncle Billy is gone. He fell fast asleep one afternoon in his chair, with the sunlight streaming in at the window. The old ship had made final harbor.

But he never placed Sange, and so it all ends, as sea stories should, in unsolved mystery.

XIV

THE LITTLE THINGS OF LIFE

AS she was born in the eighteen-thirties, it is most likely that her father and mother had selected the name after reading 'Ivanhoe,' which was the popular novel of that period. At least, they called her Rowena, and she lived to add dignity to that name. The coming of the nineteenth century saw the passing of Old Testament names in New England, and, for new names, novels, poems, histories, and historical novels were searched. One rather peculiar incident may be recorded here, the name 'Ormus' for a man. Ormus was a surviving twin; his brother who bore the unusual name of 'Ind,' bore it for only a few years and passed on. If one questioned the origin, he was told to read Milton and then he would find:

> 'High on a throne of royal state
> Exceeding great the wealth of Ormus and of Ind.'

In brief, Milton's famous description of Satan the Imperial had furnished the names for the twins.

But to go back to Rowena. It all came about because of a red-letter Bible: a certain red-letter Bible, with big bold black print, particularly adapted to old eyes — tired old eyes. And it seems the Bible belonged to a neighbor who had kindly loaned it to Rowena, and now the neighbor was moving, and because the red-letter Bible was a gift from a departed sister, and dear to the owner, Rowena was to lose it and Rowena was in need of consolation.

'Of course,' she said, 'she wants it, for she treasures it because it was her sister's. I have loved it and it seems hard to give it up, for the print was so plain. Then, too, I liked the red letters; it helped!' Her tone was one of hopeless resignation, for Rowena had experienced many disappointments. But when one is lonely and one's sole consolation is a red-letter Bible with big, bold, black type, and one's eyes bother and one's glasses are not strong enough — well, all in all, it is disappointing. She was a good Methodist and most loyal to her Church, but here she was dwelling in a little Town Farm, perched on the top of one of the Berkshire hills, four miles from her church and minister, and

now she was to lose her Bible. It was simply one of those instances of practical personal helpfulness. A rather sarcastic remark to a good city Methodist as to the wonderful solicitude of the rich city church for the poor country church and the address of Rowena, and the dear old lady received a good, Methodist, red-letter Bible, with big, bold, black type. So this all leads on to the simple little story of Rowena. and as she told it, so it is recorded.

'When I was sixteen my father came to me and said, "Rowena, William, who has lived with us as hired help for the past few years, will stay on if you will marry him." And I said, "You know best, father," and so I married William.'

In this year of Grace 1924, doesn't a plain statement such as this fairly take one's breath away?

'You think that is strange,' she continued. 'Our girls were brought up right then, brought up to realize that parents knew best. Then, besides, I had always known my husband and his people, and I liked him, and he was a good man.

'We were married three years, when William and father, leaving mother and me at home, contracted to take a band of settlers out to California, across the plains. They were gone three years. Often I heard them tell of the experience. It was a cavalcade, oxen, horses, and a drove of cows for the settlers. William brought back the horse he rode going out and coming back. They never went to the mines, but traded and brought back eight thousand dollars, money earned. So, with our little store, we bought a cozy farm and we were fairly prosperous.

'I never regretted my marriage. My husband was not a brilliant man, but was just dependable, and now, as I look back upon it all, I love his memory because he was great in little things. Do you know what I mean? It is the little things that make up life. It's just like the patchwork quilt there; little by little it is made into a whole, some dark pieces and, yes, many bright ones. William was great in the little things, the things most men, I have learned, forget.

'My woodbox was always full, always a pail

of fresh water from the well. In winter the paths were always cleared. I feel as I look back that my husband spoiled me; it is quite wonderful to have such memories, it helps over the hard places. When my glasses bother and my eyes are tired and I can no longer read or sew or knit, I give myself a sermon on the little things, and always then I think of my husband. He was so good to me when I was sick, taking all care and stealing up on tiptoe to see if I slept, and if not he sat and read to me. Then, how well I remember, whenever he got back from town, there was always a little bundle, the last to come out of the basket. This was for me: a handkerchief, a piece of ribbon, an orange (for oranges were dainties in those days); he never, never forgot. I used to call him "William of the little things" — but they made my life, and in my loneliness here their memory is blessed.'

Poor, dear, saintly Rowena. Your work-worn hands are folded now. You have gone to the place where memories become realities, where all life is as the red-letter Bible would have it. Where the men who are loyal in the little things make the great majority.

XV

THE BLESSED BABE

MARTY WELCH was the proprietor of the only livery stable in Ardley. He was the happy type of a man cast in a congenial profession, for Marty knew horses and loved horses and his business had thrived. His only cross lay in the fact that none of his three sons showed any desire to follow the calling of their father. On three warm and uncomfortable June evenings, Marty, clad in his best, had sat in the Town Hall and with keen parental pride witnessed, on each occasion, one of his sons receive a paper cylinder. These three paper cylinders had been brought home, inspected, and duly framed, and each hung in the Welch parlor. But the three sons chose other vocations than stable-keeping.

Marty had come to Ardley as a boy, one of a brood born in the old country, and so his speech carried always a 'bit of brogue.' As his stable business increased, he made a place for his old friend Caleb Slocum. Slocum had no other

home than the stable, and a bunklike couch, usually piled with blankets, served as his bed. He was the black sheep of a most respectable family and yet persisted in remaining in the town of his birth, much to the distaste of sundry relations, who occupied positions of varying heights on the rounds of the social ladder. Only one member of the family ever recognized him, his brother's daughter, who had married a pushing young fellow, now assistant treasurer of the savings bank. The recognition of his niece took form in a yearly invitation to Thanksgiving dinner. This was the event in the old man's life. The anticipation began in October, the invitation came regularly a week before Thanksgiving, and the memory lasted for the remaining ten months. Caleb suffered from what he was wont to call rheumatism. It had settled in his feet. It is doubtful if he could have stepped over a piece of string lying on the floor. He scuffed always, dragging his feet. Alcoholic neuritis, the doctors would have told you, but Caleb persuaded himself that it was rheumatism brought on by wet feet, because of carriage washing.

These two old men — Marty and Caleb — had one common bond — the love of horses. Because of this, Marty put up with Caleb's lapses, for he was well aware that his horses were safe and well cared for by his employee. Then, too, Slocum was honest, faithful, and could be trusted for long drives. Also he was never away from the stable, day or night, unless he was on the road.

Christmas was coming in that year with the first real touch of winter. It began to snow before noon on the 24th, and as night fell, the storm increased, the wind rose, and the snow drifted. Marty was staying late that night, for he rather dreaded the walk home. It was warm and snug in the little office. He congratulated himself that not a team was out and now, after eleven, there was little prospect of any more business. He and Caleb sat before the stove, smoking. Caleb dozed. Once the telephone rang and Marty was informed by Honora, his youngest daughter who kept his house, that 'if he didn't come home soon, he'd be snowed out, and Christmas Eve, too!'

He was reaching for his greatcoat, when the

outer door opened and Michael Hogan — the lone night officer of the town — stepped into the office. He was a snow-covered figure, huge, the 'fine figure of a man.' He carried a bundle in his arms which he very carefully laid down on the blanket-covered bunk.

'God save us! Michael Hogan, but ye do be giving me a start, you and your bundle. What have you?'

Hogan was brushing the snow from his uniform and did not answer at once.

''Tis a child, Marty.'

'A child?' Welch echoed, going over to the bunk. Caleb followed and all three men looked down at the bundle. Very tenderly Michael undid the white blanket and revealed a sleeping baby.

'God help us, Michael! — a live child!'

'Sure, that's why I bring it here, because it's alive. If 'twere dead, I'd take it to the undertaker. You have little sense, Marty!'

'It's a handsome baby, leastways,' broke in Caleb. He always broke in when the Hogan-Welch connections grew personal.

''Tis that,' and Hogan looked down tenderly

at the sleeping babe. 'If only herself was well and strong, sure, 'tis there and not to Welch's stable, I'd be taking it, but home to her. But she's ailin' since a month back, and her niece nursing her, and now we've got to take the little one to the Farm. Isn't it the wonderful child?'

'Hogan, I've raised six and all were wonderful when they slept, but each and every one are "divils" at night, when awake, and 'tis I who know it — I've walked miles with them!'

'You should thank God you had the privilege, and not complain because you had to care for your own flesh and blood.'

'I did *not* complain,' Welch expostulated with some hurt. 'No man ever did more for his children than I and —'

'If we've got to go to the Farm,' Caleb broke in, 'we'd better start. We'll need a pair and I'll put in the grays, double sleigh, and we'll all go.' He left, to harness the horses.

Alone, the two old men looked down at the sleeping child. Marty laid his hand on Hogan's shoulder.

'Where did you get the Blessed Babe, Michael?' he asked simply.

'But now, I was finishing "rattlin'" the store doors. I turned down by the common, head down, ploughing through the snow. I caught sight of tracks, so fresh that the snow had not blown in. I followed them into the gate of the white church and up the steps and sure enough there was the bundle, Marty, and in it the Blessed Babe.'

'But the tracks, Michael! Didn't you follow them back and see where they went?'

'I'm an officer and not a detective,' replied Hogan with dignity. The truth of the matter being, he now remembered, there were no tracks out, and it flashed across his mind that the person who abandoned the baby must have hidden behind one of the great pillars that supported the portico.

'Sure,' continued Welch, 'your age is against you for the police force of this town. We expect an officer to use his head.'

'You expect to hire Pinkerton for what they pay me,' Hogan replied with some heat. 'There's always a first time, Marty, and in twenty years 'tis the first abandoned child I've had.'

"'Tis true, Michael, but we try to hire our police with intelligence enough to meet such a situation, and what do you do? You fall down!'

'Never! The goin' is bad, but I bore the child here. I did *not* fall down.'

'You lack intelligence, Officer Hogan, and besides a criminal may have escaped.'

'You — you say that, Martin Welch, you the father of six children with whom you have walked the floor night after night — miles — to hear you tell it! You say "criminal" to the poor girl that found the burden harder than she could bear! God help us, man! Where's your heart? And this the night before Christmas and sorrow in the heart of her. They could take my job, buttons, billy, and all, but I'd not track the poor mother of the child, there. The Blessed Babe, the Christmas Child, Martin Welch, and thank God I found it in the snow and wind and storm. God, and glory be to Him, never gave me a child, but he gave me a heart. He gave you six, and man, I'm wondering what they think of you!'

'I spoke in haste, Michael. You're right.'

The impatient stamp of restless horses, the chime of bells and sundry 'whoas' and 'steadys' from Caleb. 'Twas Marty who wrapped the sleeping child and laid it in Hogan's arms, tucking the fur robe about it. Caleb drove, holding his pair well in hand. Marty and Michael were on the back seat. It was a wild night, the drifts were bad on the back roads and the wind keen. They said little. Once, only, Caleb spoke:

'It was three wise men who followed a star one Christmas Eve.'

'Sure, we'd never be arrested for our wisdom,' Marty replied.

But Michael, holding the baby tight in his arms, wept because of the strangeness of it all. The gray horses, the snow-covered figures, seemed a phantom; only the chiming bells made it all real. So they drew up to the old poorhouse and, like all old poorhouses, it was on a hill. Now it stood dark and stark, blanketed with snow.

'Just a child, Mrs. Hadley,' Hogan said, laying the little one in motherly arms. 'The Blessed Babe, we do be calling it, because 'tis

Christmas morning, and God grant 'twill grow up happy.' And Mrs. Hadley stood holding the little bundle as the bells of the sleigh grew less distinct and finally echoed away in the storm and night, the sleigh that bore villageward the three silent 'wise men.'

Caleb, guiding the pair, was turning over in his mind the one proposition that always confronted him, and to-night loomed large on his horizon, because he had been face to face with the poorhouse. If he survived Marty, Caleb knew it was here he would end his days, and Michael, simple soul, strong in the faith of his church, almost questioned the mysterious ways of God. 'For,' he reasoned, 'here He is casting a little child upon the old church steps and so into my arms, when for forty years "herself" and I have prayed for such a little one, and now with "herself" so sick and both of us old — well 'tis a strange world — but 'twas a Blessed Babe.'

Marty's thoughts were on Honora, the daughter who kept his house. He knew that at repeated intervals of ten minutes the telephone in the little office had been ringing, and he

knew she had her mother's tongue to chide his thoughtlessness. So they rode back through snow and storm, the three wise men, and so they go out of our story.

"'Twas to be a brave Christmas at the Farm.' That is, Nora Grady so proclaimed and Nora had seen many Christmases at the Farm. All the week, young people from the village had been coming, bearers of mysterious packages, which were piled in the back hall. Day before yesterday, Danny the childlike, Tim the complainer, and Mr. Winslow the father of them all, had gone off to the woodlot, and, after much reasoning and measuring, Tim had felled a shapely young hemlock. They had bound up its branches securely and Danny — laying it on his shoulder — led the way home. Tim had cut it, Danny bore it, and Mr. Winslow set himself to the task of making the stand. It had been set up in a corner of the big sitting-room and some of the young girls from town had arranged the decorations.

The storm blew itself out toward dawn and the sun rose clear, smiling on a white landscape

with a blue, cloudless sky. A fair, beautiful Christmas morning.

'If I was a child,' said Nora at the breakfast table, 'I'd be telling you that Santa Claus went by last night and that I heard his bells through the storm, else I do be dreaming that which by rights should happen.'

'I heard bells myself,' Tim volunteered.

All of which proves that for some folks, even no longer children and almshouse dwellers, the night before Christmas is a sleepless one.

Mrs. Hadley followed the usual custom at Ardley Town Farm — the custom of uncovering the tree directly after breakfast. The meal ended, they all trooped into the big sitting-room, one corner of which was curtained off with white sheeting. Tim, Nora, Danny, Mr. Winslow, Mary, Mrs. Drucet, old John Sharp — blind and bent — Anthony, and Rose. They sat in the chairs grouped before the white curtains and then Mrs. Hadley said: 'I've such a surprise for you all. A little somebody has come as a Christmas present to us all.' And then Ed Hadley pulled back the curtain and the tree, in all its splendor of gold and silver and

frosting, with many-colored balls and festoons, burst upon the gaze of the watchers, and there in a little white holly-trimmed basket, smiling and cooing at them all, was Michael's 'Blessed Babe.'

(I know the M.D.'s and the R.N.'s will condemn what follows, because it is all so contrawise to the proper rearing of infants, but they must skip it, for it is meant for the Michaels who are night police in small towns, the Martys who are proprietors of livery stables, the Calebs who are black sheep and have bothersome feet, the Noras who have crooned and cuddled many a little one, the Tims who complain, the Dannys who never grow up, the John Winslows who have been fathers of us all, the Marys who found life's battles too hard to fight alone, the Celeste Ducets who have buried three babies, the old John Sharps who — blind and bent — still love the touch of a baby's hand, the Anthonys and Roses who journeyed through life childless, but loving all children. This is for them, you see, and not for the M.D.'s with suspicious black bags, and the R.N.'s with huge aprons and spotless uniforms.) And so

Nora put out her old withered hands and gathered him in with, 'God love him! the sweet child, alanna!' and much Celtic affection, and from hand to hand he was passed, the little child cooing, crowing, laughing, happy. So came to the old Town Farm at Ardley the Christmas Child — the 'Blessed Babe.'

XVI

PAGE MR. STEVENS

A CRAYON portrait, a copy of 'Gaskill's Compendium,' a silver-plated doorplate, and a grave in the old central burying-ground is all that is left by which we can remember Homer Taylor. No, for I must add the wonderful devotion to his memory, as evinced by his daughter Sarah.

I wonder if I am able to write as I should of Sarah Taylor, for let me record I have learned much from Sarah Taylor, and that, through my friendship with her, I have seen more clearly many things that bear intimately upon humanity.

It all came about, I suppose, because of the toothache, because my first meeting with Sarah came at a time when she was suffering with a toothache. Her countenance was swathed in a bandage which framed a thin, lined face, rent with pain.

'Should like to talk with you,' she mumbled,

'only I can't. 'Tain't one that's aching — its all of 'em and all to oncet too!' So, after a bit of persuasion, Sarah was allowed to go to the dentist and there eventually she was fitted with what she had long desired; 'a brand-new set.' Some women are proud of personal adornment, some of the blessings bestowed by nature, some of a store of worldly goods; Sarah Taylor was proud of her new set of teeth.

On my next visit I was formally introduced to the molars, incisors, and bicuspids as created by the dentist. The set was removed for my inspection, upper and lower were made to function in her hands, it was wonderful! She replaced them.

'Now, I can eat everything and I'm getting fat. Misery! Land sakes! I guess I had misery for years back, and now I feel I could go out and earn my livin', only I'm over seventy and they won't let me.'

'And,' I asked, 'what would you like to do?'

'I should like to be a Sabbath School teacher. I mean a real one. I know the Bible through and through and I'd like to teach it. But, of course, that would never bring in any money and one

has to have money to live. But I could earn money week days and teach in Sabbath School Sundays. But land sakes! I'm nearly seventy-three and it's too late to begin now. "Should ought to have done" that long ago. Father always wanted me to be a teacher, but we was poor and father wasn't very strong and he was unfortunate. I had to take care of him and mother and so lost my chance.'

'That your father?' I asked, pointing to the crayon portrait in its thick gilt-washed frame. It was the picture of a man, perhaps forty, and belied her statement that 'father wasn't very strong,' for it showed a husky, bearded individual, with a set glare about the eyes.

'Yes, that's father. I set stores by that! It was a speakin' likeness, every one said. He had it done himself (for me) from a tintype. Just like father. It cost fifteen dollars. Five to the agent and ten in ten weekly payments. I helped pay and so did mother. It was thoughtful in father, he was always thoughtful. He used to say, "Sarah, when I'm gone — I'll still be a-lookin' down at ye" — and he is.'

Memories had awakened the emotions; she

dried her eyes. In speaking of her father, I had evidently opened up the floodgates of memory and Sarah, as I was to learn, was on her favorite topic.

'What did your father do?' I asked.

'Oh, most everything; that is, when he was able,' she qualified — 'choring round, cutting wood, whitewashing. He could do that fine, and lots of folks were after him. He used to help farmers and work on the roads, and in winter, when he was able, shovel snow. He used to try always to provide, even if mother didn't think so. She never gave father credit for all he did; she used to help out by washing and working out for the neighbors. Father was a home man; he always boasted he had never spent a whole night away from home: that is, willin'ly,' she qualified again.

'Always lived here in town?'

'Land sakes! the Taylors helped settle this town; headstones go back to before 1750 in the burying-ground. Father was proud of that, too, used to talk about it a lot.'

'But your mother felt he might have done more?' I ventured.

'Yes. She was sometimes unreasonable. Father used to warn me about the unreasonableness of women; he always said: "When you get married, Sarah, always be reasonable to your husband. Always give a man the benefit of the doubt, he needs it." He was right. Mother always felt he sometimes spent his money foolish-like, and then she scolded 'cause he went to auctions. But he always brought home things we needed from auctions, extra washtubs for mother and such. He brought home that from one' — she pointed quite triumphantly to the big book on the table, it was titled 'Gaskill's Compendium.' 'He got it for a dollar. It cost ten. It has got in it everything that is in all the other books.'

She took it down from the table and opened it on her lap, adjusted her glasses and proceeded turning over the pages.

'This part is all about how to be polite, just what kind of a letter to write if somebody sends you a gift. I know I used to wish somebody would send me a gift, so I could copy that letter. Then, resolutions if any one dies and invitations to balls and parties. Over here' — she turned

the pages — 'it's all about law and law papers. Lots of pages about wills' — a pause and she looked up at me. 'Father made his will like this one; I marked it.' She held it up for my inspection; a form for a will leaving money to friends and charities. 'Of course, he didn't have any money to leave, but it showed his intentions as to what he'd have done if he'd had money. You see, it left money to a church, and, to please me, he left ten thousand dollars to the church I went to, the white church at the Center. When he brought that book home under his arm, all done up in lots of newspapers, for it was rainin', and undid it on the kitchen table, mother was mad.

'"How much'd you give for that?" she asked.

'"Only a dollar," he said.

'"Only a dollar, only a dollar! Why, the taxes for last year ain't paid yet!"

'Father was very quiet like, and he said, "I know that, but education's not to be forsook. Sarah here needs this book. See, it's all about politeness and she will learn that."

'But mother was never satisfied. Then he bought this' — and she laid a silver-plated

doorplate marked 'Stevens' in my hand — 'and mother never forgave that, but I set it down as thoughtfulness. You see, all he paid was twenty-five cents for it, and he told mother he felt that I might, and perhaps would, marry a man named Stevens. You don't know any Mr. Stevens, do you?' she queried, looking full at me.

I didn't happen to remember any Mr. Stevens and told her I was sorry.

'Well, I've kind of felt it was fate,' she continued. 'I never met but one man named Stevens and he was married and had six children. Mother never really understood father. I think he was too "truxable" with her.'

'Truxable?' I questioned.

'Oh, that means "meek as Moses"; father was like that. He was a great sufferer at the last and patient. I know he said to me, "Well, if I'm sick I can't work and ain't got that on my conscience." You see, how he was anxious-like. He had a splendid funeral.' Again the emotions blurred her eyes. 'There was nineteen there, counting the minister and the sexton. I miss him.'

'And your mother?' I questioned.

'Oh, she passed away first. Father felt bad; he was some reconciled 'cause he said, "Now she'll know everything about me and be waitin'."'

I wondered if the 'everything' would give her cause for 'waiting' patiently.

'I tried to go it alone after the place was sold, but I was took sick and had to come here. One thing about father — and the minister spoke of it — father was never profane, he never swore. He warn't quick and 'petuous; he was a slow mover, but he never swore. Folks set a lot by father; let me get my papers.'

And she produced a large brown envelope from her bureau drawer. I could not help thinking of her expression 'my papers,' and how many times old people in the Town Farms had used it to me, and of the miscellaneous documents that constituted 'my papers': expired insurance policies, receipts for cake or cough mixture, a family picture or two, a tracing of a baby's hand, and clippings from local newspapers that touched the life of the owner. Sarah's collection of 'papers' was no exception

to this rule. She hunted and finally produced a few lines from the local newspaper, yellowed with age and blurred from much handling. It said that 'Homer Taylor would be missed by the townspeople.'

'There! You can see how much folks set by father, enough to have it mentioned in the paper. He was friendly with everybody. Mother didn't have as many friends. You see he was open-handed, while mother "skinched" always.'

'Skinched?' I questioned.

'Well, savin' and savin' and beatin' folks down. Near and a little more so, I guess. Not but what it was all right, only so different from father.'

And then we talked Bible and Bible history, or, that is, Sarah did. It was during this conversation that she launched the subject of 'Humbility' and its virtue in dealing with humanity.

Such, however, was Sarah's estimate of her father; as you see from her description, he was a thoughtful man, kind to his family, but physically incapacitated, as far as hard work

was concerned; such was the memory she cherished. But when later I asked Ben Shuttuck, who had known Homer Taylor quite well, he said:

'Homer, oh, Homer was born lazy; he liked hard cider. Used to get partly drunk and go to auctions. I've seen him set a barrel of sugar on the store counter and set it down again, on a bet. But his wife always worked and that kept the family one jump ahead of the poorhouse. He was always sober-spoken and deliberate when he had been drinkin' the most.'

So perhaps Mrs. Taylor, now knowing 'everything,' is naturally 'waiting,' and I wonder if they furnish clubs to certain waiters in the hereafter.

Shortly after my former conversation with Sarah, I was called again to the Town Farm. I found Sarah going about her work with wads of cotton stuffed in her ears. Feeling that perhaps she might again be afflicted, I pointed to the cotton and shouted, 'Earache?'

'No! Henry Holman's been brought here and oh! how he swears! He makes my blood gurgle in my veins, so I stopped my ears. And

him the last of the Holmans, too. Why, the big stone, on top of the hill, in the old part of the burying-ground, was the Holman who was first minister of the church, and Henry's here, cussin' and swearin' awful. He's been a fearful drunkard and now he's got "chickolosis" of the liver. That's where the liver gets so fed up on alcohol, it turns to leather like; always kills 'em the doctor says.'

Sarah was right about the swearing, I can't say as to the liver trouble. Of all profane people, Henry was the most picturesque in use of blasphemous language. He couldn't utter a simple sentence, unless punctuated with oaths; otherwise he was a pretty decent sort of chap. Swearing was a habit with him; he was, in the use of such language, fairly unconscious of wrongdoing; it meant nothing to him, it was his natural tongue.

Of him, however, Sarah said:

'The Almighty will smite Henry Holman and he will "wither like the grass of the field." No one can "mad" God Almighty and go unpunished.'

And Sarah's prophecy came true.'

The next time I visited, I marked on Sarah's thin and lined visage a smile triumphant.

'Henry's had a stroke,' she proclaimed. 'Ain't spoke a word since. One side numb and 'most helpless; sets in a chair all day. It's a blessed relief from his cussin'. I told you the Lord 'ud smite and he smote proper.'

Henry was a pitiful object, sitting stark and erect in his chair. His eyes roved to me as I came in and flashed with recognition. I was moved by the man's condition and laid my hand on his shoulder, saying:

'Tough luck! Henry, but don't lose your grip, you'll work out of it. I've seen worse cases. How do you feel?'

He looked at me, a little gleam in his eyes, fumbled with his right hand, reached for a writing-pad that lay on the table near. I held it for him and offered a pencil; slowly and laboriously he traced a scramble upon the white page; I stooped and read: 'god dam.' Had I told Sarah, I feel sure she would have prayed to the Almighty to smite yet again, so that Henry's power to write might be removed. So I held my peace and congratulated her, be-

cause now she could remove the cotton from her offended ears, and still not be troubled with the blood 'gurgling' in her veins.

And as I came away from the Town Farm, I felt genuinely sorry for Henry because, unlike Homer Taylor, he had never married; never had a daughter Sarah, who, after his death, would perpetually sing his virtues, not as they really were, but as she had finally persuaded herself that they were.

XVII

AT WAR WITH THE WORLD

TERENCE O'MALLEY — what does the name mean to you? Let me tell you what it means to me; it brings Connemara and the West Coast, the stronghold of the Joyces; the yellow furze, the rock-strewn uplands, the treeless places, the great cliffs and at their base the beating billows of the Western Ocean; Connemara, the last stand of the fairies. I know that the O'Malleys are of that land — the land of the Joyces. But I never asked Terence if it was from there he had come, for I never talked freely with him; not because I was not so inclined, but because Terence was not a conversationalist.

I once knew a married couple who had dwelt beneath the same roof for thirty years or more, and for over twenty years had refused to speak, the one to the other. A daughter served as interlocutor, and the conversation was always directed to her. Such as:

'Sally, tell your mother I am going to the store and if she wants anything to let you know.'

'Sally, tell your father he can get the flour and the vinegar.'

The daughter never repeated their messages, she never showed any interest in this conversation. Nevertheless, this custom was continued for over twenty years. But to others this couple never refrained from speech, and aside from this inter-family trouble their community life was normal.

It was not so with Terence O'Malley, known to every one at the Town Farm as 'Terry.' For he refused to speak, save to answer, 'Yes, sor,' or 'No, sor,' as the case might be. Now this trait in Terence was no passing whim, for he had lived at the Town Farm for forty-four years and had persisted in his attitude of silence.

Overseers came and went, wardens arrived and departed, inmates were admitted and were discharged or died; Terry saw these changes and held his peace. Never an inmate who might call him a crony, or who might fraternize with him. Never did he leave the Farm. Each day, as it succeeded yesterday, was lived by

him in the same way; his existence was by the rules at the Town Farm. With no exception, he was the most dependable man I ever saw.

When he first came, being then about forty years of age, the warden assigned him to the barn. It was his task to have all care of the animals, horses, cows, and swine. This became his unfailing duty, his very life. He resented the presence in his domain of any of the other inmates. He assumed all responsibility in care and feeding, and because of his devotion, there was seldom a sick creature. His day was from long before sunup, even in summer, until long after dark, when he made his last round to bid his charges good-night.

He proved conclusively that it takes two to make a quarrel; because no matter what the provocation, he invariably turned on his heel and walked away. Other inmates, those whose abiding had been of short duration, were inclined to laugh at him, tapping their foreheads suggestively. This, although he noticed it, he ignored. He always occupied the same seat at the men's table and the same place in the smoking-room. In the latter place he was ever

a good listener, but he never spoke, save as above mentioned, to answer a direct question by 'Yes, sor,' or 'No, sor.'

I knew him during the last fifteen years of his life. A small, gnarled man, with bushy brows and two piercing blue eyes. I could never break down his barrier of silence; not that I tried persistently so to do, and after I became acquainted with his eccentricities, I talked with him only in the direct manner, getting his customary 'Yes, sor,' and 'No, sor.' He had never married, and his only relative, as far as we knew, was a nephew. This man, being successful in business and earnestly desiring to help his uncle, drove into the Town Farm yard one day and, calling his uncle to the automobile, informed him that he had come to take him home. Terry looked at the younger man, looked up and down the country road, surveyed the house, the barn, the herd of cows at pasture, and said very quietly, 'No, sor!' And then turned and went into the barn, leaving his astonished nephew to discuss the matter with the warden. But Terry stayed at the Farm.

During a period of forty-four years, people

are inclined to forget details in the lives of others, and, too, in that period those who might have known had died. So it was that no one really knew just the reason why Terry O'Malley, a hale and hearty man of forty, had been obliged to come to the Town Farm. Each succeeding warden retained Terry in his original position, nor regretted the so doing. Terry might have had many privileges had he cared to accept them, the privileges always bestowed upon the faithful and trustworthy inmate. He was simple in his tastes and accepted, by preference, meager fare despite the urging of kindly matrons. When the old man was eighty-four, forty-four years after his admission as an inmate, he was taken ill, and in consequence confined to his bed. He chafed; he was evidently worried. They moved his bed close beside the window so that he might look out at the barn and the fields; he rested easier. He was distrustful of the doctor, for during the doctor's call he had overheard the word 'hospital.'

When the matron went in, she found the old man visibly disturbed. She smoothed his

pillow, drew the bed-covering about him, and asked:

'Feeling any better, Terry?'

'No, sor' (the invariable 'sor,' whether addressed to man or woman).

'You like to look out and see the barn and the cows, don't you?'

'Yes, sor.'

She found herself saying, or beginning to say: 'Tell me what I can do for you,' and then realized the bond of silence, so she began again with: 'Would you like to go to the hospital, Terry?'

An agonized look in the old man's eyes and a protest of: 'No, sor.'

'Well, you haven't got to go, Terry, so don't worry. We shall take care of you; we have talked it all out, Tom and I. He will look after you nights and I will be here during the day.' Then, after a silence, she asked: 'You do feel better now, don't you, Terry?'

'Yes, sor,' quite emphatically.

And so they cared for him day and night for two weeks, during which time the old man steadily grew weaker. At night, when he could

not sleep, the warden recounted the doings of the day and, knowing the old man's favorites among the cows and horses, never failed to mention them.

Two days before the end, the matron, sitting beside his bed, was startled to hear the old man begin to talk, breaking the silence of forty-four years. The words came slowly, deliberately, each weighed to give its full worth.

"'Tis not a free country — this America. Or else why did they send me to jail? And for what? Because I drank too much. Hadn't I the right to drink all I pleased, and no wife or children, I had? Thirty days! I was as good a workman as any in the mill. My money was my own. I paid my bills. I never made trouble. Yet Mr. Temple, who owned the mills, finally had me arrested and sent to jail. "To save me from myself," he said. Thirty days! Thirty long days! And this in a free country! 'Twas then I decided to talk to none of them and I haven't! When I got out I refused work. I'd not work for them! So they brought me here. I've done my best, barring the talk. Only, this is no free country!'

Having so spoken he lapsed into his customary silence, dozed and slept, slept and never awoke.

Forty-four years! 'Yes, sor.'

XVIII

CRAVATS, CONSCIENCE, AND CITIZENSHIP

'AMERICANIZATION.' I listened to several dissertations upon the subject at a meeting once. Some of the speakers had foreign accents, 'a bit of a brogue,' 'a touch of the Semitic,' and one who said 'de' for 'the,' always. I came away with the feeling that sundry speakers had tried to persuade me that the real American was the Indian and all that came after were immigrants. And then I thought of Mary Chilton in the Almshouse at Overton, and, of course, with Mary in my mind, my memory went back to cravats, the New England conscience, and Americanization (sounds like the 'cabbages and kings' of Alice, I know).

So I ask you, did you ever behold that work of art known as a 'biscuit cushion'? They are always made of silk pieces about the size of a refined tea roll, the kind one associates with

stewed pears, gold-band china, and company tea at the country parsonage. They are always made of silk, these biscuit cushions, because I fancy so much labor should not be given to cheaper material, and the biscuits are also stuffed with cotton wool. Of course, they were never meant as head cushions or pillows, for it is obvious that, if used for such purpose, the biscuits would flatten down and give a creased and rumpled effect: fallen biscuits, as it were, as against raised biscuits which they should be.

Mary Chilton at the Overton Almshouse was a specialist with this type of cushion, and I think they must have gone very fittingly with red-plush parlor sets (sedate and slippery haircloth would not prove a suitable background). It was through these selfsame cushions that I became interested in Mary, gleaned much of her life, and received a most generous slice of her New England philosophy.

In the manufacture of silk piecework cushions and quilts, the first requisite is, naturally, pieces of silk. From the store of pieces garnered by Mary, I learned the history of most of the

old families of Overton and much of the lives and social activities of sundry 'summer folks.' I have a secret feeling that Mary rather enjoyed telling the stories of the little silk scraps, visible evidences of past glories, and I used to wish that a little history might be pinned to every biscuit on the cushions, so that the ultimate possessor might know with what mementoes she dwelt.

But then came a time when the stock ran low and so, one day, she brought up the topic of 'cravats.' Mary belonged to the age of cravats, not neckties or scarfs. The age when it was considered a mark of gentility to ask, 'Won't you have something from the caster?' and suit the words with a whirl of the aforesaid caster (for the *best* casters revolved). Young wives, of this period, I am told, considered it one of their smartest expressions, to say in a whisper to their husbands, 'Arrange your cravat.' I enlarge on this so that this, the 'necktie' generation, may understand the language of their grandparents. It was therefore perfectly natural for Mary to ask of me: 'What do you do with your discarded cravats?'

and follow the question with an explanation — 'I have quite a few pieces that were formerly cravats; the wide ends on the larger ones are big enough for biscuits and the little pieces left I put into quilts. Men don't wear as gay colors as they did when I was young, but silk's silk and I use a lot.'

'When I get home,' I replied, 'I will take account of stock and send you the cravats and any silk pieces I can beg, borrow, or steal from my friends. Only they won't have histories attached to them as your pieces have.'

'Not exactly histories,' she said, and went on cutting the biscuits to pattern, 'but folks have always told me about their pieces. This one here — changeable gray and cherry — looks like the glow in the ashes on the hearth, the gray ashes that hold the form of the logs, even, and if the room is dark, you see the cherry glow — well, this one was a wedding dress, and then a best dress, and then the oldest daughter's best dress, and then a little girl's coat lining, and then it comes to me. I knew the bride, I knew the daughter, and the little girl; the bride's granddaughter brought it to me, and I

should feel young when I see it, but I guess the gray ashes cover the glow. It's like that when you get by seventy, the grays shut you in and the glow has mostly gone' — she smoothed the gray and cherry disk, and laid it on the pile. 'Young minister's cravat, that one. When I was young the minister stuck to black or white, but now, this one, anyway, runs to colors. Guess his wife picked it out, 'twa'n't wore much. Perhaps he didn't dare wear it much. That one's a dress of one of the summer folks. She boarded with a friend of mine, and so I got the pieces. They say it was a ball gown. Well, it's pretty, anyway.'

Then finally, the conversation lagging, and the time seeming opportune, I ventured: 'How do you like, Mary.'

'Well, now that you ask me — why — I'll just say, so-so. No complaints, you know; I have my room, my own things; the hooked rug was mother's, there are twenty kinds of flowers in it; saw you look at it. I feel at home here, yes. Can see Bald Hill from the window. Could see it from home, too. Haven't strayed *very* far, have I? Folks are good to me. And these

people, the warden and matron, are — well — they are Scandinavians and mean right.'

'And *are* right,' I suggested.

'I like her. Nice little thing, not twenty. Just as good to me, too. Wants to learn how we folks do things, and I help all I can. Like to show her.'

'And him?' I asked.

'Well — don't know.' She looked out the window a minute, threaded a needle after sundry endeavors and comments upon the fit of her glasses, then picked up a biscuit and began to run the thread through, preparatory to shaping it. 'He ain't just like us, I guess that's it. I ain't saying we are always right, but he lacks something I was born with. Something that says to me, as plain as a clock tick, "right!" "wrong!" Can't tell you why it says it, but it does. You've probably got it too. It goes with the "old stock," is a part of them. 'Tain't what I learned at school, nor at church; never learned it, always was, I guess. Do you know what I mean?'

'Perhaps I would know better if you could show me the difference between the man and —

well, say, your father.' I mentioned her father because it is characteristic of most spinsters that they bear a cherished memory of their fathers. Is it because all women must naturally have some male to cling to, to look up to, to revere, perhaps? But I have always found this so: that the father of a mature spinster always wears a halo, and, alas! in some instances this halo lies over a most ignoble brow.

'Father!' she exclaimed. 'No! he ain't one bit like father. Why, this man brags of the sharp bargains he drives in cow trades and such; laughs about it and the fellow he cheated. I asked him once if he thought it was right, and he only laughed and said, "Well, he's as smart as I am, ain't he?" I asked him if he could sleep after cheatin' some one, and he said: "I couldn't sleep if he cheated me." Somehow it's just money and no matter how it's got.'

'Well,' I said, 'how would your father do?'

'Why, father was a good neighbor. There were just us two girls, my sister and I. We lived very quiet-like. Father had the farm, owned it. We were comfortable always. I remember this about father, now you have asked

me — 'tain't much, but it shows what I mean. Once when we girls were young, father had a splendid young cow and a remarkable calf. The calf was as large at a week as most calves are at three. But you know veal has to be several weeks old before it is fit to eat. Well, father sold the cow and calf to a man in the next town who intended to sell the calf at once for veal. When father had finished the trade and the man had gone, and supper was over, we girls sat beside the lamp, busy with our lessons, mother sewing and father with the paper. Mother said, "Did you tell the man how old the calf was, Amos?" Father cleared his throat and said, "No." Not very decidedly, yet that is all he did say.

'Some time in the early morning I heard the barn door open and a team go out. Father wasn't at breakfast, but when we were nearly through, we heard him drive into the barn and then he came in and sat down. He was smiling and turned to mother and said, "I gave him back three dollars and told him it was only a week-old calf. He was satisfied. Guess I'll sleep to-night!" And mother never said a word, but

put her hand on his shoulder while she poured the coffee into his cup. Do you see from this, just what I mean?' she asked. I nodded.

Then came the episode of the first lesson in 'Americanization.' I had fulfilled my promise as to the silk pieces and had sent a sheaf of cravats and, because they were somber, I had managed to secure gay-colored pieces from sundry sources. These I had forwarded to Mary and the material had kept her employed and happy the ensuing winter. I was shown, on my next visit, a completed quilt ('for one of the summer folks') and a cushion nearing completion, and still enough pieces to make several cushions.

'Got the same folks,' I said. The matron, Hilda, had admitted me. She was a striking blonde, with a head of wonderful hair, the color of pulled molasses candy. I had paid homage to small John, a lusty white-headed youngster, and passed on to Mary's room.

'Yes. John's a wonderful baby. If I live long enough and they stay, I'm going to make an American out of little John.'

'But not big John?' I asked.

'Well it won't be *my* fault if he doesn't be-

come an American' — there was just the trace of a little triumphant gleam in Mary's eyes, as she said it.

'So you've decided to attack the Scandinavian conscience and remould it?'

'No, not that; but he is learning what American husbands are expected *not* to do.'

'As, for instance?'

She laughed.

'I guess you'll think I'm an old fool and a meddler in other folks' affairs, when I tell you. You see, this isn't just exactly a poor farm, now. John hires and boards me and whoever else may come. That makes John independent and when he gets that way he forgets, and sometimes has too much cider and then Hilda is afraid. She ain't more'n a child, anyway; but when John drinks he forgets.' She stopped. I studied her face; it was a kind, old face with the right lines about the eyes; also, just mark, there was a very firm mouth and chin. She began again:

'One night he came home and started trouble. I could hear angry words, and I knew he was forgetting the respect he owed his wife. When

I came into the kitchen he stood before her with his hand upraised to strike, and she cowered. I came between and said, just very quietly, "Why, John, we don't do that in America, you know, no American ever abuses a woman." And he sat down in the chair and I helped Hilda put little John to bed, and she came over and put her arms about me and cried. The Scandinavian women and the American women cry in the same language and in the same fashion. John has been good since.'

And so I say, when I think of this Americanization business, I see dear old Mary Chilton, seventy-five winters have laid their snow upon her hair, but seventy-five summers have kept alive the love of her ideals in her heart, the gray and the cherry glow, if you will, of the silken fabric of her life; see her standing between the irate, unreasonable John and his girl wife and saying, 'We don't do that in America' — just as nonchalantly as if a person, versed in the mandates of the most exclusive social circles, murmured, 'They're not doing this any more in our set.' Perhaps little John will grow up to Mary's standard. I hope so.

The last time I was in Mary's room mother's hooked rug, with its gay-colored galaxy of posies, was in place, an unfinished biscuit cushion lay upon the bed, and Hilda tells me that on last Decoration Day she and little John carried a big bouquet of home flowers to a little hillock in the old cemetery. If little John only remembers!

Poems

THE TEMPERANCE LEG

SAY! but this kind of charity would make you laugh!
I been here now about two years and more.
I ain't sayin' as how I was a saint,
Or how I'd orter had a crown or halo.
(My head size 'varyin'' as it used to do.)
I was drunk — I say it — and was on the track,
A blamed bad combination, when the engine comes.
It come! And now I put down one and carry nuthin'.
That was, until the ladies of the village church
Contributed and bought this extra leg.
Well, sometimes, friend, the crazy thirst for drink
Just gets a cuss — and then he's restless,
His mouth goes dry, as does the pasture spring
In August, when we've had a burnin' drouth.
It's so with me. And then the matron here
(A 'danged' good woman, I can swear to that,

But kind of churchy, with a Sabbath calm
That cuts all ways to hades when I'm mad),
She, when I feel the drouth be breakin',
Takes the ladies' — No! — the church's extra leg
And bears it off and hides it, God knows where.
You see, I'm helpless then and then I rave,
But all the matron says through her thin lips
Is, 'This limb, the ladies gave, cannot go off
A-thumpin' through the lane and down the road,
To Jason's cider mill to come back drunk.
The gift of lovin' hearts, if so profaned,
Would cease to be an act of charity,
But be a means of hurryin' you to hell.'
Say — what's a feller goin' to do, if thirsty,
And tied to locomotion on a temperance leg?

CARCASSONNE

MY father's uncle all his life had been
At sea, and having saved a little store,
Like all such sailor-men, got married late,
Then came ashore and bought himself a home.
A tiny house that set beside a marsh
Where, when the wind blew east, you smelled the sea.
On foggy days the gulls flew overhead and Uncle said,
'It's thick outside, 'twill be a nasty night.'
Once long ago, 'twas planned that I should go
To Uncle's house in Saugus by the marsh.
'And then, who knows,' my father had proclaimed,
'If it holds fair and Uncle's leg (the one he broke
In Borneo and bothers so with aches and pains and sech)
Will stand the strain, perhaps he'll take a day
And show you all there is in Boston Town.'
It had been fair a week and I had been

All ready for the trip and waited only
For our neighbor Austin's squash to ripen.
I was to ride upon the load of squash
And he would drop me at the house in Saugus.
Then came a cool, autumnal night
With a great moon that lighted all the way.
We rode through quiet ways and sleeping villages,
I never closed my eyes, but peered
At the strange, distant shapes and traced
The houses and great barns against the sky.
In all my ten, brief years of life I'd never seen
So many roofs, so many homes, so many fields.

Toward dawn an autumn mist and a sea-fog.
The next day was the Sabbath — holding fair,
With all my best of ribbons and of frocks,
I went to meeting with my Uncle's wife.
That night my Uncle said, 'To-morrow'
(Then he rubbed the leg he broke in Borneo),
'If this good spell of weather holds,
For't seems to me the line storm's almost due.
If fair, we'll steer for Boston Town.
You'll see the Common, Bunker's Hill,
And all the stores and, having care, will stand

And see the horse-cars go a-whizzing past.'
I think there was a twinkle in his eye.

That night clouds drove in from off the sea
And morning brought the rain.
So every day for a long week I stayed
In Saugus, at the house beside the marsh,
And every day it rained. 'Line storm,
I should 'a' known it by my leg.'
(The leg my father's uncle broke in Borneo.)
And Saturday, when Mr. Austin came
To take me home in the great, empty cart
(He having sold another load of squash),
Just as I kissed my father's uncle's wife good-
bye,
The sun peeked faintly through the clouds —
The first time we had seen it for a week.
So all the long, September day I rode
In neighbor Austin's springless cart and wept,
For I had been so near, yet never saw
The Common nor the horse-cars whizzing by.

UNCHOSEN

OH, the mystery of it all that I am left
And she is chosen. What has she
That I lack, that men should care for?
For it was always so; before our school-days
All the boys sought her, and I went on alone.
And then at school and after, she had a dozen,
But to none faithful — do men like that?
I often wonder. I should have loved one, good man,
And been his helpmate and borne his children.
None could have better loved maternal joy than I,
I who am denied it all — and why?
Because of what? What do I lack
That God has given other women that ties
Each to the man she's bound to for all time?
I have stood cold and hunger, poverty and lack
Of shelter, for pride — but for the man I loved
I'd have endured a thousand times as much.

She married, but she tired of him, and then
Cast him aside like a worn glove.

Then with the next — nor children ever came.
He prospered and she buried him in the best lot
There was in the old Central Burial Ground;
And such a monument as holds him down!
Its like is only seen in city places,
So they say. They also say he willingly gave up
At last, and his grave holds enough of human
woe
For all the other households in the town.

I sometimes think it's just the same with us
As with the flowers. Some by the roadway
bloom
And gather dust from the slow passing teams.
These are the posies children pluck and cast
aside,
That droop and die because of plucking and
the lack
Of water and because they grew on sterile
ground.
But in deep woods, amid the brake and fern,
Laved by the waters of the brook, blood red,
Nodding upon its slender stalk, the cardinal
Unplucked by careless hands lives through its
destiny.

Joe-Pye Weed is the loot of wantonness,
Gathered and cast aside and trampled in the
dust.
Where endless teams pass down the wide, white
road,
All for a moment's pleasure for a child.
While there beside the brook in stately solitude
The cardinal flower, queen of the quiet dell,
Lives out its life as God ordained it should.
What do I lack? Go ask the cardinal what.

DESPAIR

HE took it all, all that I saved
Against the rainy day, and railed because so small
A sum I'd gained. Then he went out and left me.
Where he has gone I do not know,
If he be living, or some stranger closed his eyes.
He broke his mother's heart, embitt'ring all her life,
And drove me here a pauper on the town.
Then who can blame me if I weep and pray,
Calling for vengeance from the Lord upon him?
May he be 'scotched,' and if the Lord ain't
Scotching — well — He knows who does it best;
To me it's all the same, if only it's done right.

FAITH

I LIKE to sit here by the window;
I can look up and down the street.
The years are not so long if you anticipate —
And so I know he'll come at last,
For I'm his mother — one can have
More wives than one and many, many children.
There's but one mother, she alone should know
Her boy's real heart, and I know his.
They say he'll never come — because of money.
Money! Why, all our troubles come of it
(Or lack of it, perhaps). I gave him all
And marked the smile I got in change
For all my hoardings. I only want my boy,
Who promised he would come — and will.
And so these years, five years, each longer,
Lonelier than the last, have lagged along,
Yet I am just as sure that he will come
As on the day I came here sick and old
And waiting for his footfall on the walk.

For him the ribbon at my neck, the decent
dress,
Nor have I quite forgotten how to smile,
Because a smile is all I have to give
On that glad day when faith is justified.

THE CELLAR STAIRS

SOME men are lucky, so we thought at least,
When Henry Weston married Brazee's girl.
She was the oldest of the lot, and pretty — well!
They said she'd only to just beckon and the boys
Would, any of them, fall down at her feet.
But somehow Hen changed, dried up, I guess;
He only talked to answer yes or no;
And if the answer wasn't in those words
He held his peace and silently moved on.

Cora, his wife, I reckon held the whip
And bossed the job for fair. At least
It seemed so to the town, to all but me.
And then one day she rushed into the neighbor's,
White and shivering and sobbed out she'd found him
'A-doubled up' near the last cellar step.

We buried him and I was bearer and the widow
Took on awful at the grave. I pitied her.
I held the mortgage on her house and so
Had interest in the way the place was run.
This brought me over quite a bit, and she was
kind.
One day in June, after a devilish task
Of mending fence, I was all hot and fussed,
And she set out a pie and homemade beer
That reached my stomach. She was so kind,
Saying as how she knew how lonely I must be,
And how my clothes lacked mending and all
that.
I never thought for twice, but up and asked
her,
Then she acknowledged 'yes' and it was done.

Well — I have learned why Hen kept silent,
I have learned why he looked drove!
That was all right — I'd kept my bargain,
Bad though it was, if only she had just kept
still
When I got near those cellar stairs. 'Twas then
She'd kind of laugh and say, 'Look out,
Hen fell down those selfsame stairs, *they say;*'

Always spoke loud 'They say,' meaning, I know,
'I could tell more, but won't.' It got
With me I never stood beside 'em, always
Jumped right by the door — used the bulkhead
Outside, to go down cellar. Scared? Well — yes —
Just scared to death. And then I sure gave up.
I signed the deeds — give her the place and stock
And moped along somehow, 'til I took sick.
She sold and left — then I came here and now,
Even here, I jump when I am passing by
The cellar stairs.

CUNNER ROCK

LAST night the wind was up; I heard
The beating of the surf against the rocks;
Ere I could sleep I pulled the coverlet
About my head, and even then I lay
Long hours awake, nor dozed 'til dawn.
The wind and sea forever seem to call,
And calling, taunt me with the fear
I hold for both, these many years.

My father hailed from Gloucester, master
He was of a small fishing craft,
The Jenny May, no stancher boat
E'er rounded Eastern Point, and Will,
My older brother, sailed with him, and
In the fair, long, summer afternoons, my mother
And we little ones would sit upon the rocks,
Keeping a watch upon the homing sail.
I always feel — now many years are gone
And I have known the sorrows of the sea —
That when my mother saw the Jenny May,
Returning from the Banks, with all sail set,

She breathed a silent prayer of gratitude,
Because the Jenny May came safely home.

That was a summer sea, the little waves
Scarce lipped the rocks, the gulls
Were flying far, and, poising in the breeze,
Seemed like a bit of fleecy cloud.
But winter came. No more we went
To the great rocks beside an angry sea,
But in the little home we sat
About the fire, and fear came to us
As each ruder blast shook the small home.
And in a winter's storm the Jenny May,
With all on board, went down.
Storm and the sea relentlessly had claimed their
stake.

I will not tell of all the struggle
That we had to live; how poverty
Came to us, and still my mother strove
(For of stanch fabric are we made,
We wives and children of seafaring men)
To keep us neatly clothed and schooled.

Where the great cliffs, in ages past,
Have broken and the boulders, tumbling down,

Cunner Rock

Stand at the water's edge, we children went
At the ebb tide to fish until the flood.
They called it Cunner Rock; never the tide
Save in the highest point in spring
Came over it. And here to girlhood grown,
I lingered, when the rest had gone,
Because I liked to look out at the sea
And dream — feeling, perhaps, 'twas all a lie
About the Jenny May, and that some day
I'd see her sailing home, headed for Eastern
Point.
Then Gershom came, a little lad
Who always hovered near to help me
With my line and take the fish I caught;
So when the tide began to ebb and we
Had put away our lines, we two would sit
And he would talk of 'when he was a man'
Of all the things that he would do,
Of countries he would see, because he planned
To be a sailor — not a fisherman — and go
To all those wondrous ports of which
Old sailor-men had told. How he would be
At last the master of a bark — 'and you,' he
said,
'Will live in a great house and wait for me,

Who, coming from the voyage, will pour
A golden shower into your lap —' But I
Sat nearer, for I feared the sea, nor dared
To tell him the misgivings of my heart.

We watched the summer moon come up,
Between the towers that stand on Thatcher's
Woe,
A great, white disc that cut the line
Of sky and sea and swam in purple pink,
The light reflected from the setting sun,
Those wondrous, opal tints that swathed
The quiet summer sea, and 'lumined every wave,
With here and there a star — so night came
down.
Then in the dusk, my hand in his,
We came up the steep path and on,
Through wild-rose brambles, to the town.

It was ordained, I have no doubt, that we,
Both children of stanch fisher folk, should wed.
We'd such a cozy home, upon the village street.
A little house all white, and a white fence
Shut in our tiny yard, but there was space
For glorious hollyhocks, to nod and tremble

In the summer breeze. So Gershom went,
On the great voyage to foreign ports.
And on the wharf, holding me to him,
Said, 'When you are lonely, go to Cunner Rock
And, looking out to eastward, know that I
Am somewhere there, and you are in my thoughts.'
So he was gone, nor ever came again.

I bore it as becomes a sailor's wife, nor broke.
One night — November being come — and I,
Who had sat lonely by the kitchen fire, arose
And, stealing from the little house, that stood
So white, where withered stalks of hollyhocks,
Blown in the gale, tapped at the window-pane,
Drew close about the little shawl I'd seized,
And struck the path that led to Cunner Rock.
The rain had gone with sunset, and the wind,
Shifting to westward, drove great, ragged clouds
Across the sky. I felt it on my face,
Its fingers toying with the loosened strands
Of hair. Impatiently I tossed the stragglers back.

Fighting the gale at last I stood on Cunner
Rock;
Looked eastward, saw the tumbling waves,
Beheld the moon — a huge pale moon —
Come up out of the sea. I marked
The silver path it cast upon the deep
Straight to my rock, the ragged clouds
Floated across its face — I saw a great bird
Winging south, a moment poised between me
And the moon — the hunter's moon —
Then float away to happier lands.

Flamed in my heart the hatred of it all —
Of wind, of clouds, of sea, for they had taken all
And left me but my youth and loneliness.
So anger seized me, and I cursed the sea,
Stretched forth my puny fist, shrieking against
The battling elements of wind and tide:
'For all that you have done to me' —
So rose my plaintive treble o'er the din —
'I curse you — even now you beckon,
But I stand against the battling wind,
And curse the threefold misery I bear.'
So wept and fell in a small tumbled heap
On Cunner Rock —

Then later came a wave
And breaking dashed me with salt spray,
The wild, west wind was mocking, for
I heard the note of laughter in its voice;
So staggered to my feet and through the bushes —
Dead brambles that had once been summer roses —
That enclosed the path, I wended home.
But e'er I raised the latch and swung the door,
I turned, saw the great moon, now higher
In the sky, thrice barred with black cloud lines,
Saw out there on the moonlit deep two lights,
Twin stars, that guard the rock of Thatcher's Woe.

NATHAN'S STAR

THERE'S a great elm that stands beside
the barn.
In summer when the sun is strong and days are
hot,
The cattle, coming early from the fields, seek
out its shade
And stand content beneath its spreading
boughs,
To wait for milking time. In autumn
'Tis all gold, but when October's gone,
It stands in its bleak nakedness, against a
winter sky.
Above it, in long winter nights, is set
One big, bright star. I know
That learned men have given it a name,
But 'tis to me just this: My Nathan's star;
He always called it his and so it has become.
To each of us, whose heart lies buried in some
little grave,
There comes a sense of sweet companionship,
If we can feel one star of all the heavens is ours.

I, in these later, lonely years, am happy, for I hold
The star that Nathan named.

That day I marked how sharply set
The old elm's boughs stood out,
Nor blurred, until the winter dusk brought snow.
That night — I did not mark the time,
But I had lain and hardly slept, I know—
There came the tread of measured feet on crunching snow,
Hushed voices on the porch. To me, at first,
They sounded far away, and then, just as it seemed
I must have dreamed, there came the knock
Sharp and insistent at the door. — And I alone.
'A chopper who is hurt,' they said to me,
Who held the light aloft, unbarred the door.
So they filed through, three men, who bore
A burden on a litter, roughly made.
John West I knew, I knew his father too,
The other man I never saw before.
I questioned not, but fixed the bed and set the pillows right,

And while they eased him down, I laid the wood
In the old fireplace and touched the lighted
match,
Then a bright blaze burst, ruddying all the
room.

'We brought him here, the nearest house, you
know.
Pierre will get the doctor if he can.
He is the man who lives alone, and cut
The old lot on the Jim Cooley place.
We found him lying crushed beneath a tree'
And then, 'He'll die, he can't hold out the night.'
So spoke John West, and having had his say
Left with his father and the man Pierre.

What had they brought me from the storm and
night?
A lonely widow on a lonely farm.
He was a dark young man, scarce thirty,
I should say, my own boy Nathan, had he lived,
Would be that old — he went when he was
five —
Somehow I whispered 'Nathan,' when they'd
gone,

And smoothed his hair as I had done
Before to my own boy. So through the night,
Alone I cared for him; marked how he fought
for breath,
Held his hard hands and prayed he win the
fight.
Once his closed eyes, fringed with thick lashes,
Opened and, resting full on me, he murmured
this:
'Ma Mère.' I stooped and kissed his forehead
And he smiled. — Then labored breathing.

Toward morning I had felt that they must
come,
The man Pierre at least, and still
Somehow I wanted him alone to mother,
For it seemed as if I had my own boy back,
Man grown, so broken that he needed me.
There came no dawn, only a glimmer growing,
With light so dim 'twas hard to tell
If really day had come. I heard
The lowing of the cows, the crowing cock,
And knew at last the day was here.
There on the bed the stranger fought his fight.
But I, who often had seen death,

Marked the lines come about the mouth,
Saw overspread the pallor and the shade,
That hung below his eyelids, partly closed.

So morning came. I brought in wood,
Mended the fire, and labored at the barn.
All day it snowed, by night the storm had gone,
And I, sitting beside the bed, gazed at the sky.
Saw the stars twinkle, traced the 'Milk-
Maid's Way,'
And Nathan's star that beckoned through the
elm.

Before the second dawn I knelt beside the bed,
He stirred and reaching sought my hand,
Then pointed to the sky, to Nathan's star.
So going left me lonelier than I'd ever been
Since little Nathan found the way before.

ANDREE DEL ROBIE

THINGS went so quiet-like before he came,
That artist fellow, with his views of life
So different from the way that we had lived,
Sarah and I. Nothing outspoken at the start,
You know, just sneers — more in the manner
Than the word. The parlor whatnot first
And all its store of keepsakes had to go —
Now in its place a thing he calls a shrine,
With a fat image that complacent smiles
As if he was accustomed to good food,
And plenty of it too. A graven image. —
So I felt the massive Bible, that denounced
such things,
Could not be kept in that same room.
One night I tiptoed down and took it out.
The vase with the wax flowers he broke,
By accident, he said, and in its place he put
A figure of a woman, sparsely clothed —
One look enough for me at such as that.
Then on the wall, where Lincoln and His
Family

Had hung for forty years, he's got
A china thing — a plaque he calls it —
Of a little boy, with hands outstretched
And a blue robe all wound about his feet,
'Andree del Robie' was the name he called it.
And I'm sure the baby must have lived
In some place, where they didn't have it cold.
A 'Body cellie's' in the hall — a 'Sarto' hanging
On the stairs. A picture of a sugar cone
There is — he calls it 'Fujiama,' and I guess
Most any name would do for such a thing —
And then he up and married Sarah; that
Just finished all. I pay the bills and feel
That the small bank account I saved
Will soon be gone — and then — well — what of Sarah?
He's always talking of his foreign friends,
'Teshan' — 'De Vinshee,' Angelo — and such —
And chatters on — but never talks of work
Nor of the dinner save to find all fault.
That's why I sneak down here 'most every afternoon —
The depot's such a place to see plain folks —

And talk of homey things that make out life.
Once in a while, to hold a little child
For some worn woman, with a wandering
brood;
Or even help a down-and-outer buy his ticket,
When his mother's waiting there at home.
Last night I got particularly mad,
Just hearing all he said on art
And such, and I broke out with this,
Shaking my finger at the naked boy:
'"Andree del Robie" never yet has buttered
bread,
Nor has he bought a pair of shoes,
Nor paid for coal, nor sent the check
To square the taxes, here.' I said just that,
Then grabbed my hat and came down here —
To mix with folks — here at the depot.

THE MASTER'S 'POLONAISE'

AT Christmas with some singers came
A girl who played most wondrously
The violin. To please Le Blas she gave the
'Marseillaise.'
And the old man stood up, but wept.
Her eyes were blue and, looking fair at me
Over the strings, with not a word,
Her bow brought forth the Master's 'Polonaise.'
I moved not, but my nails, pressing my palms,
Bit cruelly the flesh, and as the music swelled
My heart wept tears of blood; but still
I know my face showed naught
For when she ceased, I only bowed
To smile my thanks —
But Brown,
The aged man, after the rest had gone
Looked down at me and, nodding, said,
'There's blood upon your hands,' and I
In the unguarded moment, looked and saw
Blood where my nails had sunk into my palms.

The Master's 'Polonaise'

'Twas Jan, the man from Warsaw,
Who came into my life and wrecked it all.
That's of the past, I know. Since then
The judge and twelve good men have said
That I was free, yet each brooked not
The scorn he bore me, as I wandered out
Into a silent world and gathered up
The broken threads of an unwanted life.

We Polish men love land, and so
Of all who come here, we seek out
The farms deserted and long left to waste,
And by our labors (for we work
From sun to sun) reclaim
What others, gone before, have given up.
'Twas such a farm we took,
Marie, my wife, and I and sweet Therese,
The little girl my wife's first marriage brought.
The farm was lonely — a long lane
Led from the country road down to the house,
An ancient dwelling — good enough for us
Until we owned the farm — so all went well.

One night I tarried longer in the town
To celebrate some festival, and all our club

Was full of men, who like myself
Were Polish, and who held the homeland love.
And one there was — a barber they called Jan —
A man just come, made magic with the keys
And sang our Polish songs. They passed
The wine about and all went well.
But, as I rose to go, this Warsaw man
Beckoned and I went over where he sat,
And watched his lithe, deft hands
Like lightning strike the white piano keys.

Whether 'twas drink, or yet because
The Polish songs had stirred my blood,
I know not, but he held me there, and then
He played the Master's 'Polonaise,'
And sowed within my heart with the accursed
tune
The seeds of jealousy and hate.
For he had known, in youth,
The woman I had wed, and many things
He said, or rather left unsaid, and all
To the accompaniment of Chopin's 'Polonaise,'
Lightly he'd touch the keys and laugh,
And then rumble the bass and question me;
It seemed as if a devil made the tune.

Somehow I got away, but all along the road,
The long, dark, elm-embowered road,
Rose in my heart the bitterest thoughts of her
Who waited in the little house adown the lane.
So that at last, when I had raised the latch,
I roared in rage, stood there and cursed her name,
And she, holding the little child Therese
(Just wakened from her sleep and clinging tight
To her fair mother, wept and hid her head),
Stood speechless, her great eyes staring wide —
But I, the devil in me and the wine,
The echo of the Master's 'Polonaise,'
The barber's suave, insinuating smile,
I, goaded by all these, smote her, then
Closed my great hands about her fair, white throat.
There on the table lay, beside the plate I used,
A knife — somehow its handle found my hand.

So went away that night Marie, my wife,
And with her went Therese, the little child.
In loneliness I lived, nor cared to go
Beyond the borders of the farm, nor came,
For months, a person to the house.

One day the barber came, and I,
Caught unaware, must see him.
He had brought a letter from his home.
His sister wrote to tell of many things,
Of much about Marie and praised her worth,
Giving the lie to all he'd said that night,
And then he said, 'Where is Marie?'
But I, as echo answers, murmured, 'Where?'
Came then the sheriff and the constable,
Asking the question Jan had asked.
Then as I only echoed 'where' nor other word,
They snapped the irons on my wrists
And cast me into jail — Then I was free,
But all men passed me by. For I would be
Forgotten by the world, so that I might
Remember how she looked — Marie, my wife,
And sweet Therese, the little child she loved —
I know a spot that seems forever green —
Bah! I have said too much — but save
The Master's 'Polonaise' for other ears.

BILL JENKINS'S REASON

IT was Doc Marsh — he was town doctor,
Twenty years ago. They said he liked to joke,
And 'cause of that he lasted but a year,
And then moved on. At any rate, I know
He hit my case right on the head.
I had been feeling weak that spring and lacked
Spirit to work — so went from job to job.
I always hated woodpiles; — even now I hate
A tree; and the thought of a spruce lot
Brings back all my old aches and pains.
I went to Marsh, and I remember well each word
He said: 'I knew you'd come; you see,
I've seen you failing, Bill, lose all your strength.'
He stood me up and thumped me here and there,
And put a telephone on heart and lungs,
Then shook his head and scared me blue.
'You've got it! There's only one way out,' he said,

'I'll send you to the Farm, but mind!
You follow what I say: no work — go light
On that — eat hearty — anything — smoke
all you can —
Yes, chew, besides, sit in the sun, and never
Raise your arms above your waist, for if you do,
I can't say what will happen; I hope leastways
You'll last the year.' And so I came,
And that was twenty years ago, and I can't see
But what, 'sides weighing more, I'm just the
same
Old invalid I always was — I've had to fight
Each warden about work, and had my quarrels
About grub — but I've kept tight hold of this
The paper young Doc Marsh made out
The day he sent me here to fail and die.

'LE BON DIEU'

AND so, m'sieur, you honor me to come.
I, Jean, I welcome you, and clasp your hand,
I beg you stay and share the gift of le bon Dieu —
The sun. At twenty we seek the shade; quatre vingt —
'Tis then we drowse and bathe in the gold gladness of the sun.
Et bien! m'sieur, I light my pipe, mon bon ami.
At twenty, said I — ah! such long, hard years since then
Have robbed me of my all, save happy thoughts and love.
Susanne! Susanne! chérie! My eyes are dim, and yet
I see you as I saw you then, stretch out these hands
To seize you — Ah, m'sieur — I'm old, and twenty comes not back —
Up north, where winter stays so long, I lived at twenty.

Then I wed — she was the one a man could die for —
At twenty without thought — at eighty with a smile —
The night no blacker than her hair and eyes,
The snow no whiter than her flesh and soul.
Et bien — m'sieur — I see it all again: the lake —
The giant pines, that played the forest's tunes —
The little house of logs — with skins upon the floor —
And in the doorway — with sunlight blessing her sweet face —
Susanne! queen of the stately woods! my saint! my soul!
Her laughter like the murmur of the brook in spring,
Her eyes deep as the depths of pools where leaps the trout.
Her hair like night clouds — dark, yet with the touch of moonlight.
Ah, m'sieur — I cannot tell you of our happiness —
As the first man and woman dwelt — so dwelt we —

Alone — yet in the hollow of the hand of le bon
Dieu.
Then winter and its storms — snow, wind, and
then more snow.
So cold the trees snapped in the frost, the only
sound
To break the awful stillness of the woods.
I with my traps and dogs all day, and she,
Susanne,
To keep the cabin fire and greet me on return.
She was the brimming cup of happiness, m'sieur,
We creatures held from the just hand of God,
Until — m'sieur — et bien — 'tis hard to tell
it all —
The baby came, and child and mother were too
good for me,
Too good for earth — ah! le bon Dieu! to Him
from whom
They came they passed, to glorify the heaven I
hope to gain.

I sat beside her on the skins that made her
bed;
She twined her fingers in my hair and held my
cheek to hers.

'Ah, Jean, cher Jean — I leave you — be not sad — it is
The will of le bon Dieu — you are so good — mon Jean,
And pledge me this, that I and this the little child,
Shall lie beside my mother in the church.' —
Ah! m'sieur — grief — wild grief, and only echoes from the winter's woods —
Then silence — the awful silence of the cold and snow;
The coward thought of self-destruction — the trust in God.
So through that awful stillness of the frozen North
I journeyed, with the dogs and sledge, before,
Bearing the double burden of my broken heart.
I recked not cold nor hunger, not the sleet nor snow.
I'd but the pledge to keep — miles were as naught —
To lay my grief beneath the flagging of the village church.
'Twas so they found me near the goal I strove for,

But the frost had claimed a leg; I left it there.
And so, m'sieur, we of the North, we love but
once,
To le bon Dieu we pray, we keep our word,
Nor question that which God ordains.

ON PELHAM HILL

ALL day throughout this lonely land we'd ridden,
Never a house — only sometimes the skeleton of what had been
Long, long ago some little home.
Fringed by long lines of forest trees, the road
Wound in and out, crossed and recrossed the little brook;
Until at last we toiled up the steep slope to Pelham Hill.
The gathering winter dusk was shutting down
And the keen wind foretold the coming snow.
Out of a little clearing came a man leading
A horse, old and infirm, drawing a sled, light laden,
And stopped to chat, as lonesome souls will do,
When strangers pass and are not pressed for time.
And this he told me there on Pelham Hill,
As we waited to breathe and rest the horse, ere we

Took the down slope that led to other towns.
'Lonely?' he said. 'Why, yes — I used to think
I was,
But now at twenty-five 'tis not so hard; I seem
To have lived quite twice as long. I used to
hope
To get away as all the rest had done
From those deserted farms' — he swept the
valley with his hand.
'But mother clings to home, and so I stay
To see it through, because of her.
Last year, old Prince' — he patted the soft
nose —
'Could take five posts upon the sled and bring
them up,
But now, I take but three. Three posts —,
And have two miles — then go for more.
Next year, perhaps — who knows? I hope to
get
A younger horse and do it all in half the time,
Then just let Prince live out in laziness
The end of his hard years — pasture and barn,
No work, and only just to rest and munch his
hay.
But why should I complain, if mother's happy

And the home is snug and warm?
Why, all day long, out in the woods
I just dream dreams; then, too, I know the flowers
And trees and love to hear the waters of the brook,
And if I cannot buy another horse, what then?
Why, Prince and I will haul two posts, and I
Will help him on the hardest places in the road.
I'm glad I saw you — kind of nice to feel
You talked with some one who has other views of life,
And knows so many people in the world down there.'
I waved — Prince started and the lumbering sled
Groaned as it struck the ruts, the tinkling bell
Fainter and fainter grew, tolling its knell
For all of that young life, patiently plodding along,
For mother.

THE SON OF ZADOC

NAHUM, the son of Zadoc, planned to be
Of all in his small village first
In wealth; so set himself to gain and save.
'Twas a lone farm old Zadoc owned,
High set upon the hill, with pleasant view
Of the fair valley; at its feet the winding stream
Wandered in listless mood through banks
Fringed with tall iris and black alder clumps.
Oft the old man, resting from toil, would sit
Before his little house and dream. To him
The landscape meant contentment, peace, and
home;
But to the son, who saw no beauty in it all,
It meant possession — this was his —
With but the one frail old life between.
Yet that frail life continued. Simple habits
And a young manhood spent in toil
Had laid foundation for long years,
Which promised to round out fivescore.
That summer in innumerable ways
Nahum made manifest his utter disregard

Of filial fealty; — impatient that the old man
Still stood between him and his heritage.
Patient, for peaceful age knows how to persevere,
Zadoc had tilled the little garden spot,
And in his loneliness was wont
To talk to birds and plants and flowers,
To turn his wrinkled face upon the sky
And, smiling, talk to God;
For simple folk are ever those who feel
The heavens are God's and therein He abides.

So all the crops were gathered; from the trees
The last red apples plucked and stored;
The cattle home from the hill pasture,
For the nights were touched with frost.
His labor done, Zadoc, when the warm sun
At noon hung overhead, sat on the little porch,
And, with the peace of God within his heart,
Gazed down the valley at the little stream,
That wound through autumn meadows browned and sere.

One night, spurred on by lust for wealth,
Nahum had forced the aged man to sign

All that he owned to him. The trembling voice
Had pleaded, then at last, with only this:
'You will take care of me.'

Zadoc gave up all he possessed to satisfy his son.
Yet Nahum still begrudged the food he gave,
Grumbled because some wood was burned
That otherwise would ready market find.
And so one Sabbath in late fall
With wiles he knew so well, and pleasing words,
He urged a ride — 'to drive and see
The woodlot on the top of Tildy's hill.'
This was the subterfuge — for when at last
He reined the horse, 'twas at the Almshouse door.

But three short weeks, and then the old man died.
Old neighbors came and bore the plain pine box
And laid the body of the kind old man
At rest beside the river-bank, which he in life
Had loved to look upon.

But Nahum prospered, farm by farm he bought,

Woodlot on woodlot owned. And still
No man would speak to him, and children,
When they saw him come, ran from his presence.
What thoughts were his, beyond his lust for gain,
Who knows? Or who can say, if ever in the night,
When conscience did conspire with sleep,
He saw and heard strange things as some men do,
Who harbor in their hearts remorse where peace should be.

So years went on. Nahum had raised
A pair of likely colts that no one else
Would handle, and so one winter's day
He took the sled and pair and all alone
Went to the top of Tildy's hill to get
The last great load that cleaned the lot.

'Twas Enos Richardson, who lived
In the first house upon the village street,
Who raised the cry that turned the people out.
Down the long mountain road, the colts,

Foam-flecked, with heaving sides, plunged
madly on.
Somewhere back there, some sturdy oak
Had freed them of the sled and load;
And yet behind them trailed a nameless thing,
The taut lines wound about its bulk,
Cut by sharp heels and buffeting the road.
So through the quiet streets the horses ran
With no hand raised to halt them,
'Til finally they made the barnyard on the
farm
That once had been the home old Zadoc loved.

They say next Sunday, in the village church,
The bare, cold meeting-house upon the hill,
The pastor preached, and for his text he chose
One of the laws that Moses gave
On Sinai, and talked on filial fealty.
And in his prayer gave thanks
That all must bow before God's will.
'Vengeance is mine,' he said; 'I will repay.'

PROSPECT HILL

WE sat there in the February dusk
And talked 'When we was boys'.
With just boy feelings in our hearts.
'Twas then he looked at me — then paused,
And, looking over, where sky met snow,
He said: 'I always meant, some day,
To go up Prospect Hill — just take it slow —
For eighty years has got to laze along.
I want to go when the late frosts
Have taken all the leaves, and climbing's good,
And then I want to rest and look around
And mark the ships in harbor,
Tugging at their chains — miles down below.
It always seemed to me that I could reach
To somewhere, out beyond, from Prospect Hill.
Sometime we got to do it — you and I,
And take the day and just pretend we're
boys.'
'Twas then he lapsed a little, filled his pipe,
Held close the fire, just as he always did;
A puff or two — 'twas all he ever took.

Prospect Hill

I thought no more — sat looking down the road,
When Ezra's boy came by with the last load of logs,
The team bells tinkling in the gathering night,
The horses moving slow, after a hard, cold day.
I just called 'Bill,' then quiet-like, again.
There came no answer, so I touched him
On the arm — his face in the dark shadow
Looked set and white and lacked his old-time smile.
His thin, old hands just lay there, empty-like.
That's why I'm lonely here, 'cause he, you see,
At last had reached the top of Prospect Hill.

THE SERPENT'S TOOTH

WHY did they bring me here,
To this house beside the sea? I hate the sea,
He, my man, died in the sea and left me
With five mouths to feed and no money.
I have known toil and felt no rest —
Hunger, cold, want, sickness, and lack of covering,
But I fought it out! See my hands?
Bigger than a man's. I have held the plough,
Dug clams, fished, felled trees, and builded a home.
I sent them all to school, and each night
Met them at the path by the patch of woods.

Then they went out — out into the world,
All, all but one who lies over on the hill,
The happiest one I think is there.
They say John is in the great city and rich;
Clara's husband won't have me about,
I do not fit into the new home.

Prospect Hill

Abel never came back from the voyage,
And Julia I have lost sight of utterly.
What do they say about the 'serpent's tooth'?
There are no flowers on my husband's grave,
But how soft and gray are the wings of seagulls,
And the foam is sometimes like anemones.
I have done my bit — even big hands get tired,
And who will come to fold mine?

FORGET-ME-NOTS

I DO not know but what you feel,
As well as I, that sense of loneliness
When, after a long walk, you catch a glimpse,
Thro' blasted elms and vistas of neglected trees,
Of some small place, that people long since dead
Have known as home;
With broken panes and weather-eaten boards,
A sunken roof, proclaiming many snows;
The central chimney huge and ragged-topped,
The door askew on rusted hinges, half ajar.
Here straggling lilacs, as if feeling pity
For the desolation of that which they adorned,
Wave purple plumes to thwart the prying eye.
The garden — once the housewife's pride
With old-time flowers, well kept with tender care —
Is now a waste, and spindling blooms stray in the grass;
And where the little feet have trudged is thorn and brake.

About the sunken hearth, how oft have grouped
Those who have rested many a year
In the neglected plot upon the hill!

This town has many such — more than its share —
But only one of all holds for my heart the magic name of home.
To-day I plucked forget-me-nots — down by the the place
Where brook and river meet and waters mingle for the sea.
The brook is from the hills — 'twas our old pasture spring
That gave it birth — and there ('twas just a thread)
Martha had planted forget-me-nots the year we wed.
Yes, that was forty year, and now they border all the brook
From spring to river, as a good deed done
Bursts forth upon us after many years.

Well — then, when baby came, came also joy.
I mind the summer morn I tiptoed in

To the rough room, where, on the four-post bed
Beside the window, lay all that my heart had wished,
And sat in wonder, dazed at the blest bounty from the hand of God.

I did not dare give the forget-me-nots I'd gathered,
In the rude nosegay mingled with meadow-grasses.
And yet how short-lived all God's pleasure is to us.
Two mounds, enclosed by these two work-worn hands
To keep the cattle out; for all my love lies there.
'It is not meet that man should dwell alone.'
But I stayed on — nor marked the seasons or the years,
Till farm ran out and home was wrecked about me.
And then they came and took a queer old man,
With matted hair and hungry eyes and palsied hands,
And brought him here — But I want home!

Forget-Me-Nots

I want the hearthstone from my broken
house —
The fire that glows — to sit and reach my hand
Out in the darkness that has filled the room,
And feel that little hand in mine with fingers
Lingering with a fond caress. I was not lonely
there;
But here — I never have these thoughts, nor
do I feel
The touch of fingers that reach my inmost heart.
And so I'm queer, they say — and every June
I gather these forget-me-nots to bind my faith
In the eternal faithfulness.

THE BURDEN OF FOOLS

HUSH! If you tiptoe and move light —
Here take my hand — I'll lead you to it.
No! 'tis gone! Why, it was there, when you
just came.
Who was it? Don't you know? I saw it
Over there behind the barn just now.
But they have taken it away again.
I sometimes see it and then it goes.
Some say I never see it, but I do!
They lie! Can I forget it, do you think?
When? When I first saw it? Let me think.
Yes — we were just married — Cal and I,
And he was braking the night freight.
— I like your eyes — say — Cal had just such
eyes.
They always talked most when he never
spoke.
So we were awful happy — yes, we were.
And then — and then — oh, yes, that winter
morning
I came down to get Cal's breakfast for him,

And what was strange, the outside door stood
wide.
I shut it — and then — then — oh, yes! the
basket,
With the blood-stained cloth on top.
And then, I tore the cloth off, and then —
Cal! Cal! God! Speak to me, Cal!
And so — so — then — and so, if I may take
your hand,
You must move slowly and not speak,
And we will find it — Won't you come?
Sometimes it's there and then again 'tis moved.
Those two fools who brought it home, so long
ago,
And never told me of it — Won't you come?

THE FINGERS OF THE SLEET

SOME people want so much; I'm frightened
When I think of all some have, and yet
Can never get the most that life should give;
Who wend the world, through days all dulled
with discontent.
I've asked so little; yet, that, too, has gone —
'To him who hath' — I need not say the rest.
A house is home only as long as love can linger
there,
When once love goes, 'tis but a roof and walls.
No home is home unless a baby comes,
To sanctify the place and make a shrine,
Whereat we linger and receive the inspiration
That gives us courage to press on.
'Twas thus with us, 'Lijah and I, a little house,
In winter snug and warm; and Spring,
Coming adown the land, came first to us
And touched the willows by the brook,
Purpled the valley with the violets
And heartened us with her warm sun.
'Twas such a little house, so old and beaten

By the winter's storms, and yet, within, it held
All happiness for us because we lived
Each for the other and both for her who came
One spring when bluebirds nested in the orchard
trees.
To her who never yet has known the clasp
Of baby fingers, never felt a little head
Pillowed upon her breast, to her I feel
The half of life has been withheld.
And 'Lijah — poor, patient man — became a
slave,
In willing bonds tied by strong chains of gold.
He always sprawled upon the clean-swept floor,
His great length prone as if he was a penitent
Prostrate before the throne of God.
Nor dared breathe hard lest he should wake
The baby — watched its sleeping smiles
And wondered what she had of happiness
That we, who were so far from heaven, ne'er
knew.

'It is appointed' — and somehow I've recon-
ciled my faith
To all the Bible says but that — 'twas all
We had — the baby — and it broke us both.

In all the years since then I've wondered if
Perhaps because we made it all, 'twas taken.

The snow lay deep about the little house
That night — drifted in heaps above the window ledges.
The wind blew east and each rude gust,
In passing, rocked the house — the chimney roared —
The fingers of the sleet tapped on the pane;
Such a wild night for her to go from us —
So cold, so wild, so white — so unexplained.
Again I see my husband's form, with arms
Outstretched upon the little coverlet, and head
Bowed by the storm of sobs — his great hands held
The little lifeless ones that were so cold and white.
'She cannot go out there' — he would repeat,
And then again the same, and in the silence,
I could hear the fingers of the sleet,
That tapped the eastern panes.
For us no morning ever seemed to come again.
Ever with outward semblance we bore
With resignation what had come to us.

Yet, never through sixty years there came a
smile
On 'Lijah's face — not that his heart grew hard
Or that he scorned the world, but only
He has never smiled again.
Sometimes on such a night as that,
When the wind mourned over the chimney-top,
And the sleet tapped the eastern window-panes,
When I was busy with the stocking-bag,
I've looked up quick to see his kind, old eyes
All dimmed with tears, have felt his hand
Seek mine and heard his sobbing whisper,
'Why did she go out there? She was so dear to
us.'
'To him that hath' — you know the rest,
And only love that lingers makes a home.

AUNT ANN

AUNT ANN is through — leastways she says she's through.
The little tasks, the mending, and all that, she's left undone;
And, knowing there are things to do, she only smiles
And says — a certain firmness settling on her lips —
'I'm through' — So all day long she sits and gazes out,
Her old eyes set upon the hilltops to the west.
Somehow the setting autumn sun, ere it sinks down,
Pauses to lay a benediction on her silvered hair,
And filling all her little room with light,
Flashes good-night — then drops behind the hills.
She's laid aside her working dress for her best gown —
A simple garment, seldom worn 'til now.
'I'm through — for if I cannot rest at last,

'Twill never come,' she said — 'at eighty-odd
'tis time,
I want to be took care of — only that,'
For I have earned it after all these years.
No one has come to say, "You'd better rest,
Aunt Ann,"
And so I take it on myself and sit and wait.

'My life has always been a climb uphill —
Always uphill; there never was a level stretch.
And always, too, I've had the little hands
Whose fingers clutched my skirts — my mother's children,
Then my own, and at the end my children's children.
So it has been these threescore years and ten, and now
— I want to be took care of — only that —
For I would live as other women live.

'He knows not poverty who never has been poor.
With me it was inheritance — my birthright,
Through all the years the same, 'til now,
Nearing the end — dependence — that and rest.

My hill was one that never had a top.
A man came once, and when I told him that,
He smiled and said — putting his hand upon
my arm —
"The tops of great hills lie among the clouds
And so are nearer to the house of God."
Then something more about the ruggedness
Of mountains and how heaven stoops down
To swathe the ragged summits that reach up.

'But I have only seen the little hills — low-
topped.
So now I feel into my life must come some
little joy,
Some little peace, some little rest, some comfort.
— I want to be took care of — only that —
For I have been "misfortunate" and poor.
I want a lingering illness at the last,
To lay for days in a white bed and have
The sunlight gladden all the room — To have
A woman come to tend me — one who wears
A uniform of blue and a great apron — spot-
less white.
And on her head a "teeny" black-edged cap.
I shut my eyes and hear her tiptoe in and say,

"Good-morning, dear Aunt Ann" — a kindly
voice.
I want my victuals on a tray beside the bed,
I want a nosegay of bought blossoms in a vase,
Not home-grown, garden flowers — the com-
mon kinds —
But a bouquet of blooms such as I've seen at
buryings,
Whose odor clings to parlors that are only used
For ministers and funerals: roses — tuberoses
and the like.
I'm through with work and folks and every-
thing,
My hill-path's got among the clouds, I guess
— I want to be took care of — only that.'

'FOR I can only give,' he said, 'just cupboard love —
A little house, in every sense a home,
And simpler things; enough — you know,
Yet only just enough. — But 'twill suffice
If only love is there and hope — forever hope!
And when the children come, I'm sure
We both will gladly give for them,
And in their growing get more worth
Than in the other things so many have.'
Thus he talked on in boyish inspiration,
Until the flaming logs asunder fell and glowed,
And, flickering, died among gray ashes on the hearth.
But through it all she only sat and listened,
No word assenting, no helpful nod, nor aught,
Until he noticed — stammered — stopped.
Then silence, save the ticking of the clock.
'You used to feel as I felt, back in June,'
He said — 'there by the pasture bars we sat,
Your hand in mine, your eyes spoke love,

And mine — well, adoration —
We listened for the first faint "whip-poor-will"
That the night breeze bore from the fringe of
woods.
We both exclaimed, in the same breath,
With tightening clasp of hands,
"When the whip-poor-will first calls to greet
the spring,
What we are doing then, all thro' the year
The selfsame task, will be our daily lot."
So have I planned for happiness and love
And now — and now —'

Then she: 'But that was June, you know,
And June is such a ways; this is December.
I know your love and felt I loved you, too,
But there are things a woman craves
Besides just man and home and child,
Things that I never had — and long for.
Waking in the night I seem to feel
I cannot live without them.
To simply live and age before my time,
With countless worries, for the lack of means;
To grow as old at forty as mother is
(You know she looks three score),

To be a bearer of your children,
And a drudge; to live, yet never live —
You ask too much! I must not choose
What you would wish, but what is best
For me and those you'd force me to produce.
I hate the thought of cupboard love!
It's smug self-satisfaction — stationary,
Never to see beyond the hill rims
Of this peaceful valley —
Why peaceful? Why? because we driven women
All submit, hugging our longings to our unwarmed breasts!
Not I! If you'll not try your pinions —
Soar! Even if you fall — then you'll have none of me!'

'But don't you know,' he interposed,
'The little house — I own it now,
And being mine is yours?
Birds never mate save when the nest is built.
So I can give you this at least and wait —'
'Yes! Wait!' her gesture all impatience.
'My father said the same — naught else has mother done
But wait and slave to fill the mouths

Of an increasing brood. Children! I hate
them!
Have I not mothered all the clan?
Even the mites — the happiest ones — that
sleep
Below the stingy headstones father growled at
buying.
Oh, I know — I know — and I rebel!
This is not June — winter is cold —
Love dies when troubles multiply.'

'The little house — our little house,' he sobbed;
'For you — and now for whom? for what?'
She closed her eyes — the lashes narrow slits —
'Oh, sell it! I don't care! I'm tired.
'Tis time you went — 'tis late —'
And the old clock, there in the hall,
Sedately ticking, paused as man will clear his
throat,
And the sweet bell chimed twelve.

THE END

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